Roman Mithraism: the Evidence of the Small Finds

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the Evidence of the Small Finds

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edited by / redactie

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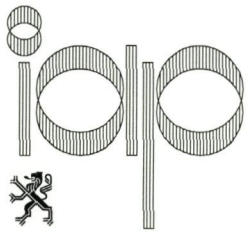

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Introduction

With the recent discovery of a small wooden mithraeum in the Grijpenveld just outside the modern town of Tienen/Tirlemont in the Belgian province of Flemish Brabant a circle was completed. For, although it is not the most northerly mithraeum ever found (which is at Krefeld-Gellep, on the Rhine north of Cologne), the Tienen mithraeum is the first to be discovered in the land of the founder of the modern study of the Mysteries of Mithras, Franz Cumont (1868-1947). The year of the discovery, 1998, straddles the centenary of the publication of Cumont's *Textes et monuments relatifs aux mystères de Mithra* (1896-1900), which inaugurated the method of systematically cataloguing archaeological and epigraphic materials as the essential preliminary to the scientific study of ancient religions; and all but coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of his death. The conference subsequently held in Tienen in November 2001, whose proceedings are presented in this volume, and which was organised by Prof. Guy de Boe, Staf Thomas and Marleen Martens, can properly be seen as one of the several commemorative gatherings, in Belgium, France and Italy, in Cumont's honour. Yet the coincidences also mark a massive theoretical and disciplinary distance. In Cumont's day, the Tienen mithraeum would have been dismissed as uninformative, if it had even been recognised for what it was: there are no monuments of any kind, no inscriptions, it was built of timber, and apparently contained nothing of any interest. Virtually none of the inferences which Marleen Martens and her co-workers have been able to make about the cult of Mithras in this rural *vicus* of the *civitas Tungrorum* could have been made in 1898: not simply because none of the necessary infrastructural knowledge had then been accumulated – the cataloguing, sourcing and dating of coarsewares, the classification of the archaeofloral and -faunal record, analysis of timber, pollens, food-remains and animal by-products ('ecofacts'), the results of archaeozoology in general and taphonomic site-histories in particular –, but because the very aims of the study of ancient religion at that time excluded the possible contribution of such knowledge-fields. Studying religion meant learning about gods, reconstructing theologies, perhaps even ethics, inferring subjective meanings and aspirations. Ritual, and especially sacrifice, which is now considered the crucial hinge between ideological representations and the social order, was of minor importance, and hardly investigated.

The discovery of the mithraeum at Tienen can serve as a symbolic marker in other ways too. Vermaseren's *Corpus* lists 73 Mithraic temples discovered and published prior to 1945; many of them were simply raided for monuments, in others virtually nothing was found; of the most important, the temple at Dura-Europos, only a preliminary account has ever been published, while the great majority of its numerous graffiti are probably permanently lost to the scientific world. The only excellent publication among these was R. Forrer's account of the mithraeum at Königshoffen, now a suburb of Strasbourg (1913), although patient recovery-work by I. Huld-Zetsche on the Frankfurt-Heddernheim mithraea has subsequently revealed the importance of some of the ceramic finds of that earlier period. By contrast, 54 new mithraea have been published since the Second World War, no less than 33 (61%) of them discovered since the publication of volume II of the *Corpus* in 1965 (omitting the new mithraeum at Perge in Pamphylia, which has not yet been excavated). Of this latter group, the temples at Hūarte in Syria, Caesarea Maritima in Judaea/Palestina, Marino, the Castra Peregrinorum in Rome, Ponza, Vulci, Aquincum V, Novae – perhaps Martigny – contained conventionally-important monuments or internal arrangements, and about some, such as the cellar in Naples and the building belonging to a villa nr. Königsbrunn (Lkr. Augsburg/Raetia), virtually nothing is known. But many of the others, and particularly the 17 new mithraea in the NW provinces, are significant not for their architecture or their monuments, but because of their 'small finds': the taphonomic material, food-remains, ceramics, glass, coins and other small metal objects. Prior to the routinisation of the new archaeology, and the provision by local authorities of laboratory techniques and support-personnel, none of this

material would have been attended to with the required precision, and most of its potential value would thereby have been lost. (The presentation of such material in Vermaseren's *Corpus* – scrappily listed, where noted at all, at the end of the entries for mithraea, and virtually unillustrated – is extremely indicative of the attitude of the traditional history of religions towards such 'mundane' finds. Yet Vermaseren represents a considerable advance on Cumont in this respect.) The mithraea at Pons Aeni (Pfaffenhofen am Inn), discovered in 1977/8, and Künzing (1998), both in ancient Raetia, are cases in point. Very little of these temples could be recovered – the floor-plan of Künzing indeed is largely conjectural, inferred from the location of post-holes – yet they are among the most important recent finds: Pons Aeni because a quite unexpectedly early date for its foundation (ca 100 AD) could be established through analysis of the sigillata-ware from the Pfaffenhofen potteries, and because of its situation at the heavily-used bridge over the Inn on the main road from Iuvavum (Salzburg) to Augusta Vindelicum (Augsburg-Oberhausen); Künzing because of the 34 kg of animal bones, originally deposited in external refuse pits but subsequently washed into the mithraeum, and analysis of which shows that the animals consumed, principally chickens (cocks or capons), were killed, and presumably therefore prepared and cooked, on site.

It is however the mithraeum at Tienen which most strikingly underscores the need to call upon the full range of detailed artefact- and ecofact-studies of 'minor' or 'small' finds if Roman provincial archaeology is to move away from its traditional 'service' orientation in relation to ancient religion in general, and Mithraism in particular. New monuments certainly can provide new facts for the historian; but 'small' finds can do so on a still larger scale, and in relation to entirely new questions, if the archaeologists can drawn upon sufficient technical support, from ceramicists, archaeozoologists, palynologists and so on to create these new facts. This involves moving away from mere recording and listing of finds towards the active construction of new hypotheses which 'small' finds can support or disprove. One obvious example is the comparison between the taphonomic finds in the mithraeum at Künzing and the pattern of meat-consumption in the neighbouring fort of the *ala V Bracaraugustanorum*, or the wider patterns of such consumption in the North-Western provinces. Another is the inference from the pit-refuse at Tienen that the piglets were all killed at roughly the same time, at the end of June or the beginning of July, and that the festival must have involved at least one hundred people, who cannot possibly all have fitted into a building measuring 12.5 x 7.5m, so that the feast must have been held in the open air. As Nicholas J. Saunders has observed: 'Archaeology cannot hope to reconstruct the life-ways of past societies on the basis of an assumed inability to understand the resulting patterns of past activities. Archaeologists need to consider how and why certain events might have occurred in the past, suggest their possible archaeological correlates, and develop a methodological framework to interpret them'.

Marleen Martens' main aim in organising the conference on small finds at Tienen was less to make her team's extraordinary finds more widely known within the scholarly community, though we were all very impressed with their range and novelty – above all because of the remarkable *Schlangengefäß* with an internal pipe, which, when filled with wine and then heated, was evidently intended to spurt warmed wine from the snake's mouth, a cultic invention which suggests an entirely new, indeed revolutionary, interpretation of the lion-krater-snake motif, but also the lid with the man-faced lion appliqué – than to assert the need for what we might call an 'artefactual turn' in the study of the ancient religions of the NW provinces. Here she is striking the same path as a number of younger French, German and Swiss archaeologists, in particular S.Lepetz, W. van Andringa, M. Poux, M. Witteyer, and C. Olive, who have been stimulated to fresh thinking by the large-scale taphonomic deposits in a religious context at various Gallo-Roman sites, and in the recently-discovered sacred enclosure of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz. These specifically archaeological challenges happen to coincide with the now-familiar recognition of the centrality of sacrifice in Greek and Roman religion (a recognition shared by the historical school represented by Walter Burkert, and the 'School of Paris'), and more broadly with the recognition that the diversity of these religious cultures is in some ways better understood by attending to their concrete transactions with the Other World (their cultic practices) than by concentrating solely upon pantheons, 'beliefs', claims, or even votives – transactions which are in many cases surprising, or unexpected, and which challenge received understandings. Archaeologists, particularly Roman provincial archaeologists, need to develop new methods and hypotheses if they are to contribute effectively to these altered concerns.

The papers of the Tienen conference are to be seen in the light of this concern for methodological innovation. The title 'Small Finds' was intended as a pragmatic stimulus to this end, and as a deliberate contrast to earlier Mithraic conferences, whose orientation has been exclusively towards the history of religions. It also however marked the desire to pull the Mithraic finds of the NW provinces out from the shadow of the more dramatic and splendid sites in Italy, or, now, Syria, and highlight the distinctive contribution that the new archaeology can make to the re-construction of the

cult in this region. The conference however also offered the opportunity of drawing attention to some very recently-discovered Mithraic temples – apart from Tienen itself, those at Bornheim-Sechtem near Bonn (C. Ulbert), in the grounds of the well-known villa at Orbe-Boscéaz, SW of Lac de Neuchâtel, Canton Vaud (T. Luginbühl *et al.*), and the temple in the *Crypta Balbi* in the southern Campus Martius in Rome (M. Ricci, L. Saguì)– it was unfortunately not possible to obtain reports about the two temples at Güglingen (SW of Heilbronn), or Künzing, or M.-A. Gaidon-Bunuel's further work on the temple at Septeuil. We may add to this group the presentations of accounts of old excavations of mithraea (A. Hensen on 'Heidelberg II'; M. Clauss & A. Hensen on the 'Eiskeller' at Bliesdalheim).

The opening paper by A. Schatzmann, building on his admirable report on the 'small finds' from older excavations which can be used to reconstruct ritual action (to be published in the BAR International Series), calls attention to the fundamental issue of norm versus local peculiarity, and sketches the variety of different ways in which 'small finds' can add to our understanding of Mithraic ritual. This approach is picked up by L. Allason-Jones in her paper on the mithraea of Hadrian's Wall. There follows a group of papers mainly devoted to the taphonomy and/or the ceramics of particular temples, and the inferences concerning ritual practice that can be drawn from them: Tienen (M. Martens, A. Lentacker *et al.*), Bornheim-Sechtem (J.-C. Wulfmeier), Orbe-Boscéaz (J. Monnier, Y. Mühlemann), Martigny (F. Wiblé, C. Olive), Crypta Balbi (J. de Grossi Mazzorin). A second group concentrates on different aspects of specialised Mithraic ceramics: incense-burners (J. Bird), the waste from the Rheinzabern potteries (M. Thomas), the reconstruction of the now well-known Wetterau-ware *Schlangengefäß* from the Ballplatz-Mainz (I. Huld-Zetsche), and the issue of the specific character of these snake-decorated vessels as represented by older finds from Carnuntum (V. Gassner). A final paper in this group tackles the finds from an analogous, non-Mithraic, complex in Apulum (C. Höpken). A third group can only be described as 'miscellaneous', since the papers approach the issue of small finds in unrelated, though defensible, ways (R. Gordon, G. Dorin Sicoe, M. Marquart, M. Weiß, E. Sauer, K. Sas). Finally, it was felt that it would be useful to add a fairly complete bibliography of publications on Mithraism since Roger Beck's 'Mithraism since Franz Cumont' (1984), a list which itself indicates something of the shifts of interest which have occurred within the field over the past vicennium.

Lastly, however, I would like, in the name of all participants at the conference, to thank the organisers, and Marleen Martens in particular, for arranging such an innovative and stimulating contribution to Mithraic studies.

Richard Gordon

Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer funktionellen Topographie von Mithrasheiligtümern*

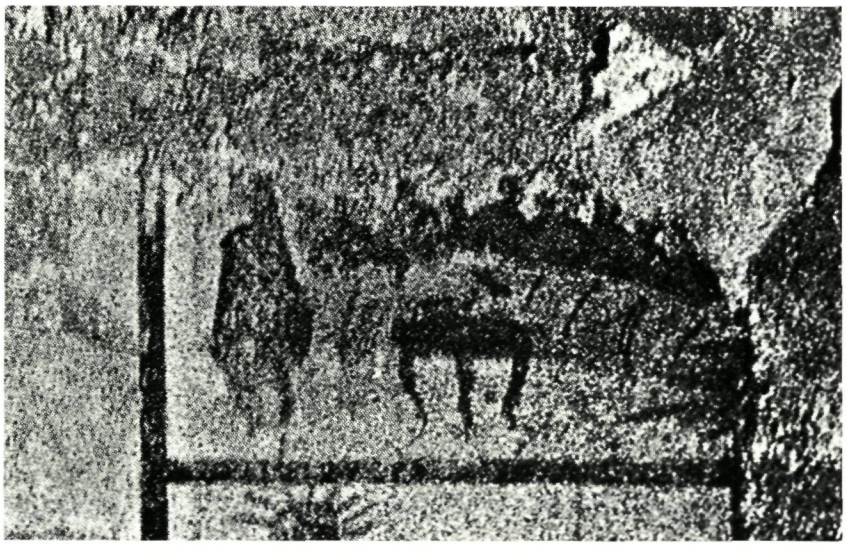
Andreas SCHATZMANN

Schon immer ließ sich im Zusammenhang mit Mithrasheiligtümern quer durch ihr Verbreitungsgebiet ein geradezu charakteristisch gewordener Kontrast zwischen einer gewissen Gleichförmigkeit im Gesamtgrundriß auf der einen Seite und einer beeindruckenden Vielseitigkeit in den Accessoires auf der andern feststellen – dieser Eindruck ist gerade durch die jüngsten Ausgrabungen wieder ausgesprochen deutlich geworden. Diese Vielseitigkeit stellt sich beim Versuch, eine funktionelle Topographie insbesondere für die Innenräume von Mithräen zu entwickeln, als besondere Herausforderung dar.

Und doch – gerade ein solches Vorgehen kommt im Grunde einem Urbedürfnis der Mithrasforschung entgegen. Denn es geht hierbei um Fragestellungen, für die es im allgemeinen nie an Interesse mangelte, paradoxerweise aber bis in neueste Zeit dennoch nicht unter Beizug aller zur Verfügung stehenden Möglichkeiten nach Klärungen gesucht wurde[1]. In einfachen Worten formuliert lauten diese:

1. was eigentlich genau während der Mithrasfeiern (und ggf. in ihrem Vorfeld) in diesen Gebäuden geschah, und
2. ob sich einzelne 'kultische' Aktivitäten in ihrem erwartungsgemäß vielfältigen Spektrum genauer bestimmten Zonen innerhalb der Heiligtümer zuordnen lassen[2]. Der speziell in dieser Hinsicht höchst eingeschränkte Aussagewert von ikonographischem, epigraphischem und literarischem Material ist bekannt. Gefragt sind deshalb unmittelbarere Quellen: architektonische Strukturen im Innern der Anlagen *und* insbesondere die Kleinfunde, denen die Konferenz nicht von ungefähr in erster Linie gewidmet war. Unsere Interpretationen müssen wir, wenn wir weiterkommen wollen, auf den Informationen *beider* Gruppen aufbauen, und zwar synchron und in größtmöglicher Vollständigkeit. Dabei ist klar, daß in Bezug auf Quellen*kritik* etwa bei den Funden andere Kriterien zum Tragen kommen: ein Stichwort ist hier die Genese des Fundbilds, auf die noch zurückzukommen sein wird. Im folgenden sollen, nach einer kurzen Einleitung mit Überlegungen grundsätzlicher Art, einige interessante Aspekte mit einer groben Auswahl von Beispielen illustriert werden, wobei das gemeinsame Essen und die Initiationsriten, zwei besonders wichtige Bereiche des mithrischen Kultalltags, als Ausgangspunkt gewählt sind. Gleichzeitig soll damit auch ein Eindruck von der Menge offener Fragen vermittelt werden. Zunächst aber ein kurzer Blick auf die Anlagen als Ganzes (vgl. dazu Fig. 1)[3].

1 *Mithräum Barberini, Rom. Detail aus dem Seitenfries des Tauroktoniefreskos, rechte obere Ecke* (nach della Portella 2000, 39).



I

Jedes Mithräum besitzt zu einem gewissen Anteil Grundelemente, die in allen Anlagen stets wiederkehren, auch wenn sie in Form und Ausführung minime Unterschiede zeigen mögen. Sie erfüllen im Kult wesentliche Grundfunktionen und sind deshalb absolut unerläßlich[4] – als Beispiel sind hier etwa die Podien im Hauptraum zu nennen. Daneben gibt es offensichtlich auch Einrichtungsgegenstände, die nicht in allen Heiligtümern vorkommen, von denen sich einige aber in ihrer Funktion gegenseitig ergänzen: verschiedene Arten von Kultbildern, von Lichtquellen usw. Die Funktion muß

* Der Beitrag stellt einen zusammenfassenden Überblick über Methodik und Fragestellungen einer umfassenderen Materialvorlage dar, deren Veröffentlichung im Rahmen der Int. Series der BAR (*British Archaeological Reports*) vorgesehen ist.

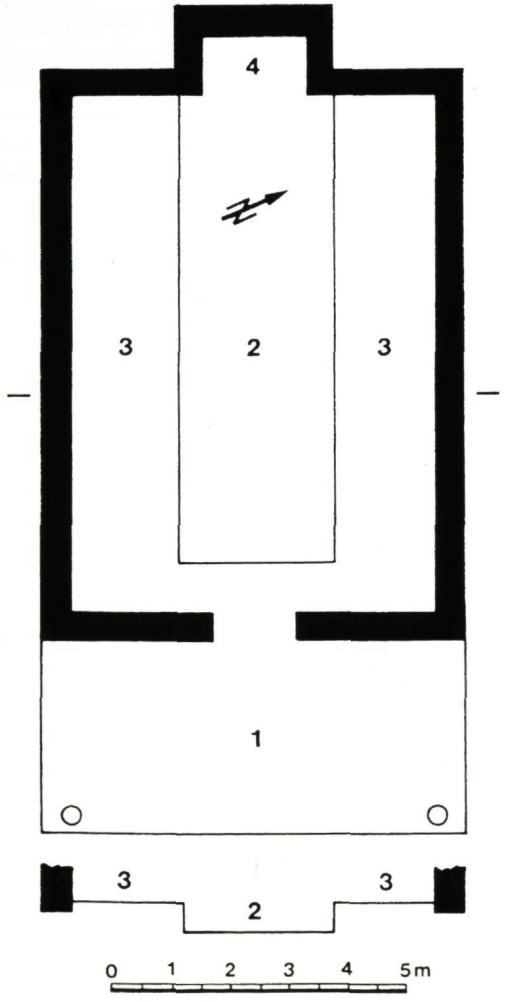
[1] Die Gründe hierfür sind vielfältig, sollen aber in diesem Rahmen nicht weiter diskutiert werden.

[2] Dies, ohne von einer 'Bindung' an bestimmte Zonen zu sprechen, denn eine solche Prämisse würde, wie sich auch aus einigen der im folgenden angeführten Beispiele zeigt, der Realität nicht gerecht. Es geht vielmehr um 'Tendenzen'.

[3] Eine ausführlichere Diskussion einer schematischen Einteilung von Merkmalskategorien,

also, weil für den Kult essentiell, dort, wo der *eine* Gegenstand fehlt, zumindest durch einen *anderen* Träger derselben Funktion erfüllt werden. Als dritte 'Kategorie' kommen schließlich Elemente hinzu, die in unabhängiger Weise einmal auftauchen und einmal nicht, mit anderen Worten in ihrem Vorhandensein nicht entscheidend für das Funktionieren des Kults sind oder additiv zu anderen Elementen vorhanden sind. Das können Prunkobjekte sein, die auch einem persönlichen Bedürfnis eines Stifters nach Selbstdarstellung entsprechen mögen; wir dürfen aber nicht vergessen, daß bestimmte Eigenheiten einer Anlage u.U. auch auf kult*externe* Alltagsrealitäten zurückgehen. Ein drastisches Beispiel hierfür ist das Londoner Mithräum, das auf instabilem Boden gebaut war: dieser Umstand führte zu einer steten Verstärkung der Außenmauern, Nachbesserung der Böden und überhaupt zu tiefgreifenden Umwandlungen im inneren Aufbau des Speläums[5]. Auch wenn ein Schema wie das vorgeführte naturgemäß defizient ist[6], so zeigt es doch, daß die in unserem Zusammenhang spannendste und zweifellos auch quantitativ wichtigste Kategorie die mittlere (d.h. diejenige substitutiver Elemente) ist, und zwar gerade die keineswegs so einfach und pauschal beantwortbare Frage, bei welchen Einzelelementen sich überhaupt gleiche und bei welchen sich verschiedene Funktionen abzeichnen. Auf die jeweilige Anlage übertragen, können dann in einer nächsten Stufe Überlegungen etwa folgender Art anschließen: inwiefern beispielsweise Gruben an verschiedenen Positionen in Mithräen ähnlichen Zwecken dienten; ob die Gefäße zur Präparation von Speisen in ihrem erhaltenen Spektrum den Vorgang auch bereits als ritualisiert oder darin eine gewisse Flexibilität erkennen lassen, oder, um ein drittes Beispiel zu nennen, ob Gläser und Becher, wie sie in schöner Menge etwa aus Pfaffenhofen (Bayern) bekannt sind[7], einfach frei austauschbar waren. Es ist ganz klar, daß man hier durchwegs auf große Mengen an Vergleichsmaterial angewiesen ist.

2 *Mithräum von Riegel. Grundriß* (nach Cämmerer 1986, 507, Abb. 324).



II

Mit dem Kultmahl ist ein Element angesprochen, dessen zentrale Bedeutung in der mithrischen Kultpraxis wohl nicht ernsthaft in Zweifel gezogen werden kann; auch ist hier naturgemäß die Quellenlage am besten. Das in der Kultlegende verankerte gemeinsame Mahl von Mithras und Sol wurde offensichtlich durch einen *heliodromos* und einen *pater* nachvollzogen[8], aber auch – und vielleicht im Anschluß daran – durch eine größere Zahl Eingeweihter. Als Zeugnis hierfür dürfte eine Darstellung aus dem Seitenfries des Kultbilds im Barberini-Mithräum in Rom (Abb. 1) anzusehen sein[9].

wie sie hier vorgenommen wird, und der damit verbundenen inhärenten Problematik ist im Rahmen der eingangs erwähnten Publikation vorgesehen. Die hier geäußerten Überlegungen haben durchaus vorläufigen Charakter; die Klassifikation verlangt noch in verschiedenen Punkten nach Verfeinerung und Präzisierung.

4 Strenggenommen muß auch die grundsätzliche Annahme eines steten Vorhandenseins von Grundelementen diskutiert werden. Dies ist vor allem für die Frage von Belang, ob der römische Mithraskult eine archäologisch nicht faßbare Anfangsphase im 1. Jh. n. Chr. gekannt hat (Sauer 1996, 7). In unserem Zusammenhang ist dieses Problem allerdings nicht von Bedeutung.

5 Shepherd 1998, bes. 74 f., 88, 225-227.

6 Der besondere Wert eines Modells der vorgeschlagenen Art, das den komplexen Gegebenheiten in der Realität im Grunde gar nie gerecht werden kann (vgl. Fn. 4), liegt m.E. darin, daß es gerade durch diese Defizienz interessante Einzelfälle noch deutlicher hervorhebt. Ein Beispiel ist etwa das 'Minimal-Mithräum' in der Via G. Lanza in Rom (dazu Gallo 1979), dessen Hauptraum in einem Vorratskeller einer Stadtvilla eingerichtet wurde und sogar ohne Podien auszukommen scheint. In Wirklichkeit ist wohl davon auszugehen, daß sich diese im (Ende des 19. Jhs. zerstörten) Bereich des darüber liegenden Gartens mit Nymphäum befanden. Zumindest das Kultmahl fand also nicht im heute noch erhaltenen unterirdischen Raum statt (Hinweis durch Dr. Alison Griffith). Dieses Beispiel unterstreicht die Wichtigkeit des jeweiligen Einbezugs der äußeren Umstände für eine Gesamtbeurteilung.

7 Garbsch 1985, 413-416, bes. auffällig die gut erhaltenen Glasbecher 428-432 und v.a. Abb. 27.

8 Man vergleiche die Szene auf dem Relief von Ladenburg CIMRM 1275a mit der Darstellung aus Konjic CIMRM 1896: in der letzteren ist eindeutig ein solcher 'Nachvollzug' erfasst, was sich v.a. im Miteinbezug von Trägern tieferer Weihegrade zeigt, die in dieser Szene in Dienerrollen mitagieren. Abbildungen z.B. bei Merkelbach 1984, 356 und 381.

9 Die Szene, um die es hier geht, befindet sich in der oberen Ecke des rechten Seitenfrieses; sie ist im wesentlichen erst nach einer in jüngerer Zeit erfolgten Restaurierung erkennbar. Zum Zustand vor und nach der Restaurierung vgl. die Bilder in Pavia 1999, 184-186, außerdem Vermaseren 1982, plate XV und della Portella 2000, 38 f.

Aber auch die Kulträume an sich stellen ja im Prinzip nichts anderes als *triclinia* dar, an deren Gastgeberseite der Gott selbst bzw. sein Stellvertreter, der *pater*, plaziert ist. In welcher Form auch immer man sich nun derart transzendierte Mahlzeiten denkt, diese mußten irgendwo vorbereitet werden, und die Hinweise darauf, daß dies *auch* in den Heiligtümern geschah, sind bekanntlich nicht wenige. Sogleich drängen sich aber Fragen auf, deren Beantwortung dann einiges schwerer fällt: war die Essenszubereitung, war schon eine vorausgehende Opferung der Schlachttiere in ein Ritual eingebunden? Gab es überhaupt in allen Vorräumen von Mithräen auch eine Feuerstelle? Welche Interpretationen sind denkbar, wenn eine solche fehlt? Und, wenn vorhanden, wurden wirklich alle von ihnen auch zum Kochen verwendet? Denn es gibt gute Gründe, für die Vorräume auch andere Funktionsbereiche anzunehmen: Warteraum, Umkleideraum, Stapelraum für Geschirr, Geräte und Requisiten, und – wie sich noch zeigen wird – auch Kultraum. Mit diesem Hintergrund sollen als nächstes einige Beispiele im Hinblick auf ihre wiederkehrenden Muster und Individualitäten betrachtet werden, geordnet nach zunehmender Komplexität.

Am Anfang der Reihe soll das Mithräum von Riegel stehen (Abb. 2): von dessen Materialreichtum hat eine kleine Ausstellung im Winter 1999/2000 in Karlsruhe und Freiburg einen Vorgeschmack geliefert; die endgültige Vorlage in einer Publikation wird immer noch mit Sehnsucht erwartet[10]. Dem Hauptraum vorgelagert war hier ein hölzerner Vorbau, der sich noch über indirekte Spuren nachweisen ließ. Im rechten Teil dieses Raums lag eine so große Menge von Kannen, Tellern und Räuchergefäßen teilweise noch ineinander gestapelt (Abb. 3), daß hier mit Sicherheit ein Gestell gestanden haben muß, das irgendwann zusammengebrochen war. Zahlreich waren auch die Reibschalen, und wozu hätte man diese sonst gebraucht als zur Vorbereitung von Speisen? Der Befund eines Gestells in einem Vorraum hat durchaus seine Parallelen: So fanden sich etwa in Pfaffenhofen (Abb. 4) im entsprechenden Raum um die 400 Nägel und ebenfalls viel Geschirr[11]. In Martigny (Abb. 5) betrat man von der Seite einen Vorraum, in dessen Ecke sich eine Installation aus Trockenmauerwerk befand. Die Häufung von Kochgeschirrscherben läßt eigentlich nur den Schluß zu, daß hier auch wirklich gekocht wurde. Der Befund wird im übrigen ergänzt durch einen Ofen im Freien vor dem Gebäude[12]. Da andernorts bisher die unmittelbare Umgebung der Mithräen zumeist nicht genauer untersucht wurde, weiß man nicht, ob ein solcher zur üblichen Ausstattung gehört, was grundsätzlich ja nicht unmöglich wäre. Als Stapelraum (und Sakristei?) diente in Martigny wohl ein von der Vorraumfläche abgetrennter Raum, der interessanterweise nur vom Hauptraum aus zugänglich war. Neben diesem 'klassischen' Typ gibt es auch die Anlagen mit 2 vorgeschalteten Räumen. Hierfür mag zunächst Biesheim (Elsaß) als Beispiel dienen (Abb. 6)[13]. Aus stratigraphischen Gründen ist ganz klar, daß der äußere Raum ein sekundärer Zusatz ist. Er besitzt im Eingangsbereich eine Feuerstelle, während der innere Raum, hier als *apparatorium* bezeichnet, wieder die scheinbar für Stapelräume charakteristischen Abteilungen zeigt. Inwiefern Keramik und andere Kleinfunde diese Deutung unterstützen könnten, darüber findet man im Vorbericht noch keine Angaben, aber die Materialbearbeitung dürfte unterdessen hier weitere Erkenntnisse geliefert haben. Man stellt sich aber auch die Frage, ob denn der in der ersten Phase allein existente Vorraum mit seiner ausgesprochen kleinen Grundfläche die später auf zwei Räume verteilbaren Funktionen tatsächlich alle schon erfüllte. Gewissermaßen als Höhepunkt der Komplexität schließlich noch das Mithräum von Orbe (Abb. 7)[14]: hier wies wiederum die Keramik den seitlich an den Hauptraum angesetzten Raum als Zubereitungs- und Lagerungsort von Speisen, allerdings ohne Feuerstelle, aus, während man in den Räumen 141 und 149 vermutlich Geräte verschiedener Art auf Regalen und in Schränken aufbewahrte. Interessant ist hier auch die Frage des Zugangs. Die erhaltenen Schwellen erwecken nämlich den Eindruck, daß man die Küche auf jeden Fall passieren mußte, um

[10] Die Bearbeitung der Funde ist jetzt abgeschlossen; siehe den Kurzbericht Cämmerer 1986.
[11] Garbsch 1985, 364, 438-440.
[12] Wiblé 1995, 4 f.
[13] Pétry & Kern 1978, 8-10. Demselben Typ gehört auch die Anlage von Mundelsheim (Planck 1989) an.
[14] Martin-Pruvot & Luginbühl 2000, 40 f. Siehe auch den Beitrag von T. Luginbühl und C. Monnet in diesem Band.

3 *Mithräum von Riegel. Ineinandergestapelte Räuchergefäße aus dem Vorraum* (Photo Verfasser).

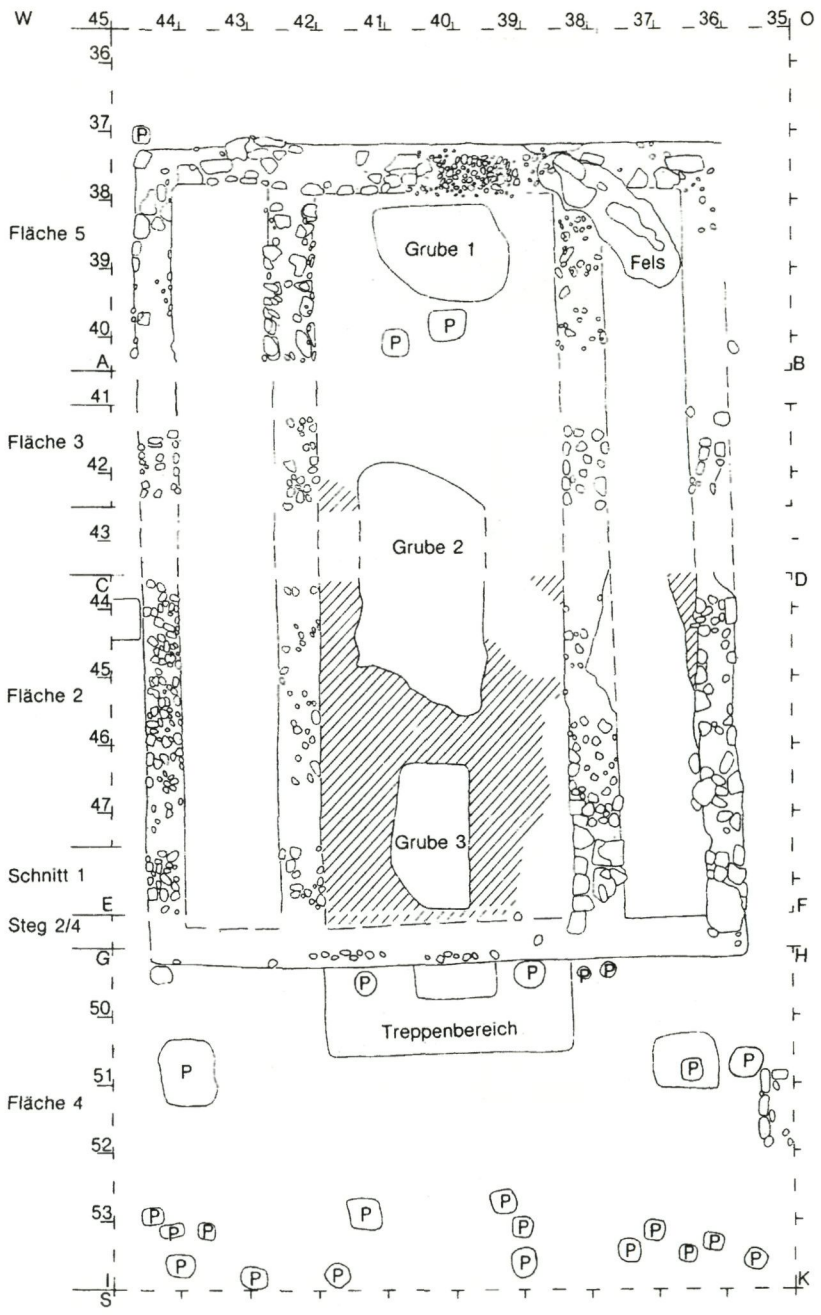
dann entweder direkt oder via Raum 134, der vielleicht ein Umkleideraum war, ins Speläum zu kommen. Ein direkter Zugang in nur einer Achse ließ sich nicht nachweisen und existierte vielleicht auch tatsächlich nicht. Dies würde wiederum für eine über den Ort reiner Vorbereitungsarbeiten hinausgehende Bedeutung von Raum 140 sprechen. Im übrigen scheinen auch andere Mithräen einen Trend zur Vermeidung geradliniger Zugangsachsen zu bestätigen (in Martigny mußte man rechtwinklig umbiegen; in Biesheim sind zumindest die Türachsen verschoben) – es war u.a. ja auch wichtig, den Hauptraum von natürlichem Licht möglichst gut abzuschirmen.

Als Ergebnis dieses Überblicks läßt sich festhalten, daß bei den Vorräumen in aller Regel mit einem Polyfunktionalismus gerechnet werden kann, wobei sich bei komplexeren Anlagetypen eine feinere Funktionsdifferenzierung zumindest erahnen läßt. Ebenfalls nicht außer acht lassen darf man den Zeitfaktor, denn die Anlagen sahen natürlich kaum während ihrer ganzen Benutzungszeit gleich aus – das wurde am Mithräum von Biesheim deutlich. Doch wurde keineswegs nur immer vergrößert: es gibt auch das Gegenbeispiel von Rudchester am Hadrianswall, wo ein ursprünglich separater Vorraum in einer späteren Phase aufgegeben wurde[15].

III

Eine wesentliche Stütze für Interpretationen von Funktionen aller Art erhalten wir durch die *Kleinfunde*, was sich u.a. ja auch an den eben betrachteten Beispielen zeigte. Neben der Festlegung von Verbreitungsschwerpunkten ganz bestimmter Formen innerhalb eines Mithräums, die eher nur im Einzelfall funktioniert, ist – sowohl bei der Keramik als auch bei anderen Fundkategorien – speziell das Spektrum der überhaupt vorkommenden Formen im Mithräumsbereich wichtig; dieses kann gegenüber zivil-militärischen Kontexten ein deutlich anderes Bild ergeben[16]. Allerdings variiert die Überlieferungslage von Mithräum zu Mithräum stark, entsprechend der individuellen Geschichte jedes einzelnen Gebäudes. Wie sollen wir also Materialmengen und -spektren beurteilen, mit dem Wissen, daß das Spurenbild meistens einen Zustand *nach* der eigentlichen kultischen Aktivität widerspiegelt, von dieser durch nachweisbare Zerstörungen oder zumindest weitreichende Veränderungen getrennt? Die Grenzen, die durch diese Tatsachen gegeben sind, sind ohne Zweifel eng, doch lohnt es sich hier dennoch zu differenzieren. Aus der besonders aufschlußreichen Arbeit von E. Sauer geht ja u.a. deutlich hervor, daß es ein einheitliches End-Szenario für Mithräen nicht gibt, ja daß manchmal eine Plünderung mit Zerstörung noch lange nach Ende der Kultaktivitäten erfolgt sein kann[17], und es scheint in der Tat, wenn auch selten, Mithräen zu geben, die nie Opfer destruktiver Gewalt wurden, sondern irgendwann einfach aufgegeben wurden und langsam zerfielen. Für

4 *Mithräum von Pfaffenhofen (Pons Aeni). Grundriß* (nach Garbsch 1985, 361, Abb. 4).

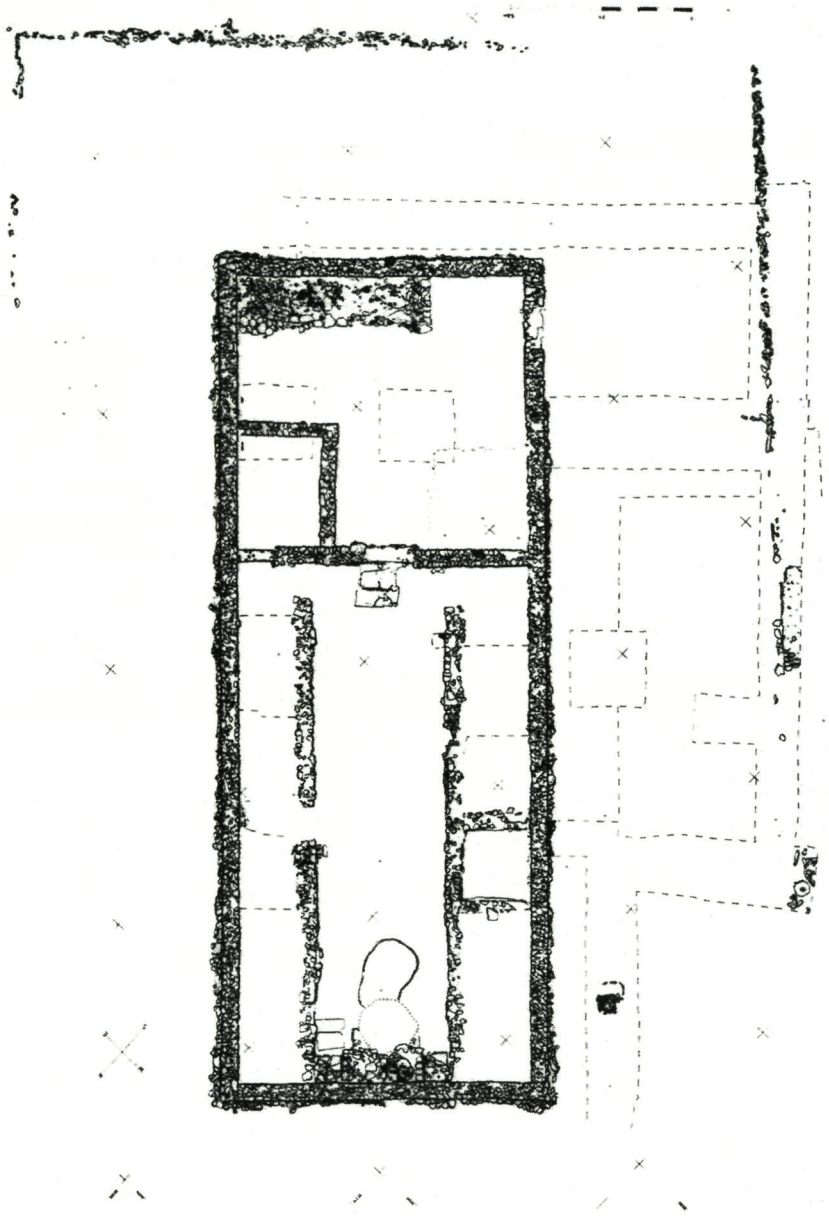


[15] Gillam & McIvor 1954, 195 f.; auch die Spuren des früheren Raums führten bei den Verfassern zum Schluß, 'that it had never been very ornamental or very safe'. Dennoch fragt man sich, auf welche ursprünglich hier erfüllten Funktionen man in der späteren Phase offenbar verzichten konnte.

[16] Zum Beispiel im Kastellvicus Künzing: Schmotz 2000, 134-139.

[17] Sauer 1996, 64-69; cf. auch 37 f. über die Schwierigkeit, Ikonoklasmus archäologisch eindeutig nachzuweisen.

5 *Mithräum von Martigny (*Forum Claudii Vallensium*). Grundriß* (nach Wiblé 1995, 6, Fig. 9).



Riegel darf man dies z.B. annehmen[18], für Orbe wird es erwogen, doch ist dort augenfällig, daß man das Inventar systematisch geräumt hatte[19], weil es sonst doch wohl nicht lange gedauert hätte, bis Plünderer aus der Umgebung, nicht von ideologischen Überzeugungen, sondern von ganz unmittelbaren Absichten getrieben, sich materiell zu bereichern, das noch Brauchbare fortgetragen hätten. Offen bleibt, warum das in Riegel *nicht* geschehen ist. Eine 'kontrollierte Aufgabe' ist auch dann gegeben, wenn ein Mithräum in einer späteren Phase anderen kultischen Zwecken diente, wie in Mackwiller (Elsaß) oder in London[20]. In letzterem Heiligtum wurden anfangs des 4. Jh. mehrere Skulpturen aus früherer Zeit sorgfältig vergraben – man könnte fast sagen: bestattet –, und auch das kleinere Mobiliar wird man nicht einfach liegengelassen haben.

Wenn ein Mithräum andererseits im Feuer oder durch andere mutwillige Zerstörung endet, müßte man nach der angestellten Überlegung quantitativ mehr Material erwarten, allerdings in ungeordnetem Zustand und hohem Fragmentierungsgrad. Bei einem religiös motivierten Ikonoklasmus, aber auch bei der Suche nach wertvoller Beute, dürften nämlich eher Skulpturen, Reliefs und Prunkgefäße primäres Ziel gewesen sein, kaum aber das normale Speise- und Kochgeschirr, und noch weniger irgendwo vergrabene Speiseabfälle. Dazu kommt, wie schon erwähnt, daß Mithräen gar nicht selten lange Zeit, wenn nicht Jahrhunderte, freistanden, bevor eine nennenswerte Beschädigung erfolgte. Selbst in Martigny hatte sich bereits eine Ablagerungsschicht gebildet, bevor doch wohl christliche Eiferer in diese hinein ein Loch gruben, um die Altäre dort zu versenken.

Nun gibt es Katastrophenereignisse – Brände und Einstürze – natürlich auch immer schon *während* der Benutzungsgeschichte der Heiligtümer; die daraufhin erfolgende Renovation verwischt dann jeweils die älteren Spuren, und, schlimmer noch, durch die Neuplanierung gelangt unter Umständen Fremdmaterial ins Gebäude, das mit dem Mithraskult überhaupt nichts zu tun hat. Prominentestes Beispiel ist hier wohl das schon einmal erwähnte Mithräum von London[21]: weil der Boden im Westteil einsackte, mußte er immer wieder neu aufgefüllt werden. Bis zum Ende der Benutzung des Gebäudes hatten diese Schichten eine Mächtigkeit von etwa 1 Meter erreicht; die Niveauunterschiede im Raum mußten folglich immer wieder neu angepaßt werden. Doch auch im Zusammenhang mit Renovationen gibt es den archäologischen Glücksfall, der eine Momentaufnahme kurz vor der Katastrophe liefern oder auch ältere Überreste vor späteren Störungen versiegeln kann. So wurden in Orbe vermutlich nach einem Brand die Reste des früheren Mobiliars in einer Grube gleich vor dem Eingang gesammelt. Aus dem Scherbenmaterial ergab sich ein Minimum von 83 Gefäßen, was in etwa dem Geschirrinventar der früheren Anlage entsprochen haben und somit auch in seiner Zusammensetzung als repräsentativ angesehen werden könnte. Besonders auffällig war beispielsweise ein Satz von 12 Bechern, alle vom Typ Déchelette 72: nach Einschätzung der Bearbeiter sei nicht auszuschließen, darin das Set einer 12-köpfigen Kultgemeinde zu sehen[22].

Aus den erwähnten Situationen ergibt sich somit das Fazit, daß im Keramikmaterial aus Mithräen durchaus ein Potential für qualitativ-quantitative Interpretationen liegt, daß die Genese des Spurenbilds aber unbedingt in jedem einzelnen Fall neu beurteilt werden muß. Wegen der geringen Anzahl fertig bearbeiteter Inventare müssen sich vergleichende Aussagen immer noch auf einen sehr generellen Rahmen beschränken. Es ist aber anzunehmen, daß sich gerade dieser Umstand im Lichte

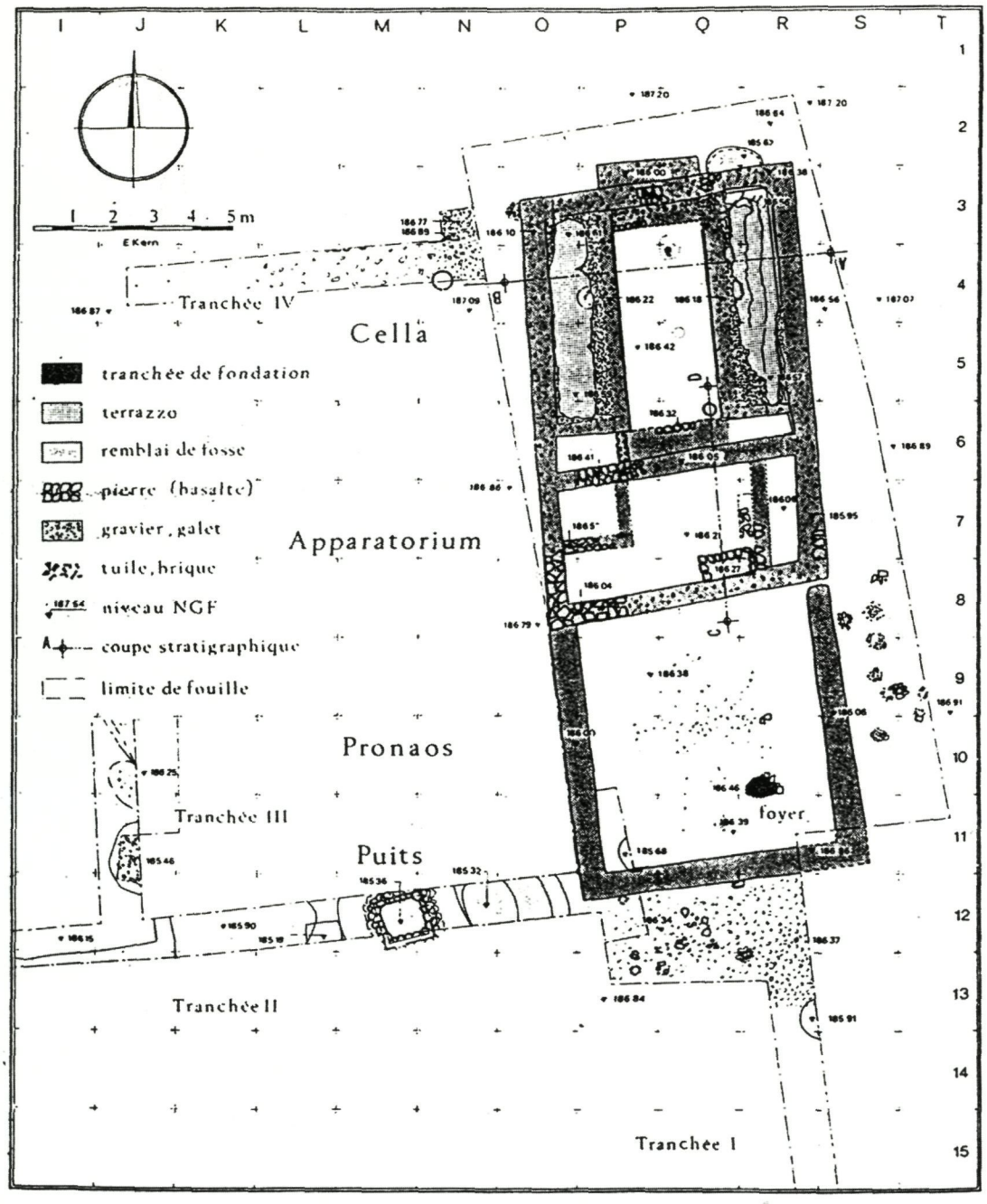
[18] Sauer 1996, 60.

[19] Martin-Pruvot & Luginbühl 2000, 41 f.

[20] Mackwiller: Hatt 1957; London: Shepherd 1998, 82, 86, 227-229.

[21] Shepherd 1998, 71; zum Problem des 'background noise' 104 (Keramik) und 208 (Knochenmaterial).

[22] Siehe Fn. 14.



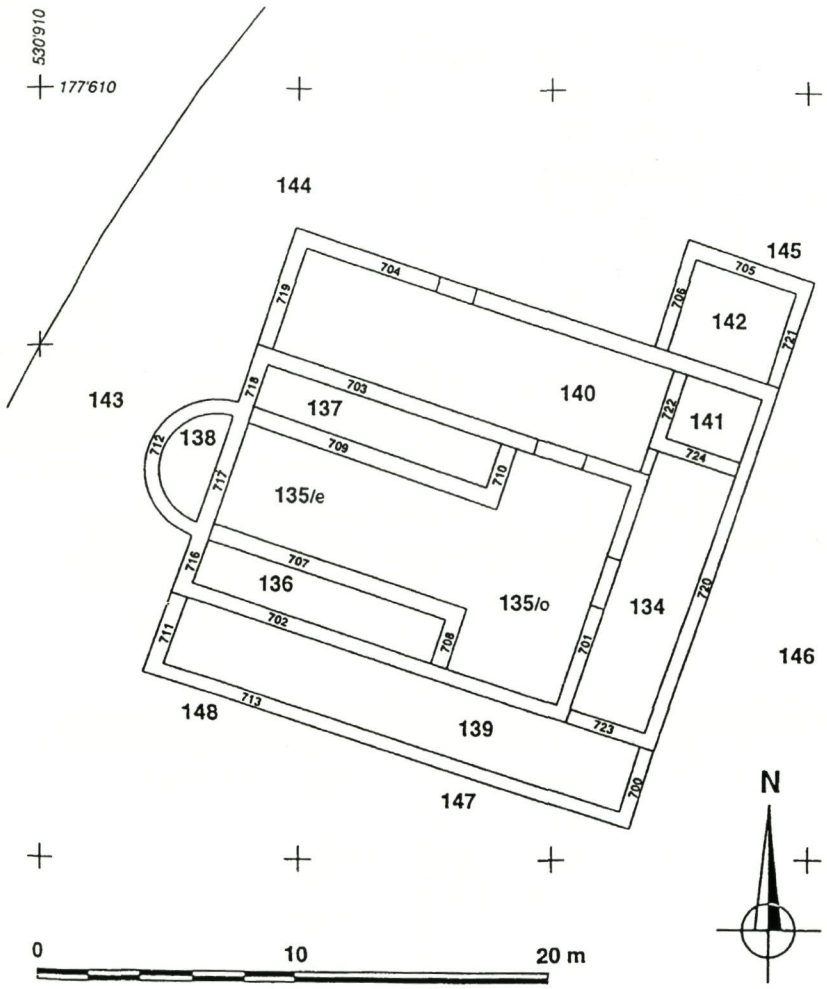
6 *Mithräum von Biesheim. Grundriß* (nach Pétry & Kern 1978, 24, Fig. 1).

der neuesten Entdeckungen sehr bald ändern wird. Auch läuft derzeit noch die Aufarbeitung mehrerer neu ergrabener Heiligtümer mit viel interessantem Material und teilweise sehr guten Erhaltungsbedingungen (neben den in diesem Band vorgestellten Fundorten etwa Künzing, Güglingen). Was man bisher dennoch schon sagen kann, ist grob zusammengefaßt etwa folgendes[23].

So gut wie überall scheint Trinkgeschirr eher zahlreicher zu sein als Eßgeschirr, eine feinere Aufgliederung der beiden Gruppen ist dann allerdings wieder schwierig. Bei den Trinkgefäßen wiederum fällt regelmäßig die Dominanz von Bechern im Gesamtmaterial auf. Weiter erwecken auch Näpfe (Drag. 27), Drag. 33, Schüsseln und Schalen den Eindruck, daß neben dem Fleischkonsum, der sich in den Knochenresten spiegelt, der Genuß von Soßen und überhaupt eher flüssiger, ev. brei- oder eintopfartiger Speisen eine Rolle spielte. Besonders qualitätvolle Ware scheint beim Eß- und Trinkgeschirr kein absolutes Erfordernis gewesen zu sein, auch wenn hier regionale und zeitliche Schwankungen feststellbar sind. In der Regel bezog man einfach die am betreffenden Ort gerade übliche Keramik; dies sieht man z.B. in den Mithräen am Hadrianswall mit ihrem bemerkenswert lokal gefärbten Geschirrspektrum. Eine Ausnahme bilden in dieser Hinsicht nur ganz besondere Gefäße, bei denen dann jeweils zu diskutieren ist, ob es persönliche Stücke eines *pater* oder eher Weihega-

[23] Das hier umrissene Bild wird durch die neuen Erkenntnisse aus den Untersuchungen zu den Anlagen in Tienen und in Mainz um viele Konturen bereichert; siehe die entsprechenden Beiträge von M. Martens und I. Huld-Zetsche in diesem Band.

7 *Mithräum von Orbe. Grundriß* (nach Martin-Pruvot & Luginbühl 2000, 17, Fig. 6).



ben oder beides sind. Trierer Becher mit der Aufschrift DEO INVICTO sind in dieser Hinsicht selbstredend; ein anderes Beispiel ist der wunderbar gearbeitete Barbotinebecher aus Pfaffenhofen, der aber bei einem lokalen Töpfer in Auftrag gegeben wurde (Abb. 8)[24].

Nehmen wir die Zusammensetzung des oben erwähnten, vermutlich geschlossenen Komplexes von Orbe als Richtgröße, so macht dort das Eß- und Trinkgeschirr etwa 50% aus, die andere Hälfte wird von Koch-, Anrichte- und Vorratsgefäßen bestimmt[25]. Regelmäßig treten Amphoren, Kannen und Krüge auf; wichtig für die Frage der Speisezubereitung sind v.a. Kochtöpfe, Deckel und Reibschalen. Auch hier können sich lokale Unterschiede abzeichnen; diese wird man aber erst mit zunehmender Datenmenge zuverlässig deuten können. Während nämlich Reibschalen eigentlich immer vorhanden sind, fehlt manchmal das eigentliche Kochgeschirr. Das *kann* damit zusammenhängen, daß man das Fleisch vielleicht eher gebraten hat (eine wichtige Unterstützung einer solchen Hypothese wären hier Funde von Bratspießen); oder man kochte in der Nähe, was z.B. für Orbe nicht ganz ausgeschlossen ist. Die Deckel können im Heiligtum ja auch einfach zum Warmhalten von Speisen benutzt worden sein.

Besonders informativ im Hinblick auf die Zusammensetzung des Kultmahls sind natürlich dessen direkte Überreste. Schon in älteren Grabungen (z.B. Sarrebourg) fiel der hohe Anteil an Geflügelknochen auf[26]; seit nun osteologische Untersuchungen selbstverständlicher Teil einer Auswertung sind, hat sich dieses Bild bestätigt und in verschiedenster Hinsicht auch verfeinert[27]: die Dominanz von Geflügel ist nämlich nicht von Ort zu Ort gleich stark – auch Schweinefleisch wurde geschätzt, und zwar in der Regel von sehr jungen Tieren. Jedenfalls scheint man generell auf gute bis sehr gute Fleischqualität geachtet zu haben.

IV

Vieles spricht dafür, daß eigentliche Initiationsakte im Gegensatz zum Kultmahl nur an ganz bestimmten Daten stattfanden und auch im mithrischen Kalender jeweils eine Besonderheit darstellten[28]. Was den Ablauf der Riten angeht, so verfügen wir nur über die in allen Überblicksdarstellungen aufgezählten, sehr begrenzten Einblicke aus zufälligen literarischen Erwähnungen und den Wandmalereien von Capua[29]; dazugekommen ist als wichtiges Zeugnis in jüngerer Zeit das Mainzer Gefäß, das in diesem Band im Artikel von I. Huld-Zetsche behandelt wird. Doch auch Bildszenen wie etwa CIMRM 188 aus Capua (Abb. 9) sind nicht frei von Rätseln: ist die Figur mit der phrygischen Mütze wirklich ein *pater*? Und was hält er der Figur in der Mitte – offensichtlich dem Initianden – entgegen: eine Fackel oder ein Schwert[30]?

Wie können nun Kleinfunde dieses Bild gegebenenfalls ergänzen? Hier hängt alles an punktuellen und dann auch verschieden deutbaren Funden; zu bedenken gilt es auch, daß etwa die für die Rituale benötigten Requisiten vermutlich oft aus organischen Materialien bestanden und sich nicht erhielten, andererseits blieben sie bei der Aufgabe eines Mithräums wohl auch nicht in diesem einfach liegen. Unter dem Erhaltenen sticht allerdings *eine* Fundgruppe hervor, von der regelmäßig einzelne Stücke in Mithräen auftauchen: Waffen

[24] Garbsch 1985, 398-402.
[25] Martin-Pruvot & Luginbühl 2000, 46-49.
[26] von Fisenne 1896, 164.
[27] Zu nennen sind hier die neueren Beiträge zu Künzing (von den Driesch-Pöllath 2000) und Orbe (C. Olive, in diesem Band). Vgl. auch die Aufarbeitung des Materials aus London in Shepherd 1998, 208-215.
[28] Vermutlich einmal im Jahr; vgl. Piccottini 1994, 49. Der auf ein einmaliges 'Festessen' hindeutende Befund von Tienen ist bisher absolut singulär; derartiges kann nicht als die übliche Regel angesehen werden (siehe den Beitrag von A. Lentacker, A. Ervynck und W. Van Neer in diesem Band).
[29] Abgebildet u.a. bei Merkelbach 1984, 287-290 oder Schwertheim 1979, 28, 32, 65.
[30] Vgl. die Deutungen bei Schwertheim 1979, 68 ('brennende Fackel'), bei Merkelbach 1984, 288 ('Stab oder Speer') und bei Clauss 1990, 112 ('stabartiger Gegenstand, vielleicht ein Schwert').

(Abb. 10)[31]. Früher wurden diese generell mit der Tracht der Träger bestimmter Weihegrade verbunden, entsprechend der Symbole auf dem Fußbodenmosaik im Mithräum des Felicissimus in Ostia, was natürlich nicht ganz auszuschließen ist. Dennoch erscheint es mir attraktiver, darin im speziellen Spuren von Initiationsakten zu sehen, für welche ja auch die übrigen Quellen den Einsatz von Waffen belegen. Bemerkenswert sind etwa die immer wieder vorkommenden Schwertteile. Von Tertullian[32] wissen wir, daß einem künftigen *miles* bei seiner Einweihung ein Kranz an einem Schwert gereicht wurde, und auch sonst muß es bei Mutproben eine Rolle gespielt haben. Das Riegeler Schwert bleibt in dieser Hinsicht ein Einzelfall mit wohl ganz speziellem Kontext[33]. Aber auch die in Abb. 10 und 11 zusammengestellten Stücke haben teilweise ein spezielles Aussehen, das rituellen Gebrauch durchaus wahrscheinlich macht. Ein Beispiel aus Künzing (Nr. 1) besitzt eine überlange Griffangel, und in *Pons Aeni* fand man eine Bronzehülse (Nr. 4), die vermutlich einen außerordentlich voluminösen Holzknauf überzog. Ein besonders luxuriöser Schwert- oder Dolchgriff aus Gagat kam ferner im Londoner Mithräum zutage (Abb. 11)[34]. Mit dem Schwert aus Künzing könnte man natürlich auch Opfertiere getötet haben; dasselbe kommt für die Messer in Frage, die dann in einer nachgestellten 'Stiertötungsszene' die Funktion von Mithras' Dolch übernehmen konnten. Andererseits sind Messer auch einfach unabdingbare Küchengeräte.

Ein zuvor nicht bekanntes Ritual, das eindeutig ebenfalls zu einer Initiation gehören muß, ist auf dem erwähnten Mainzer Krater eindrücklich dargestellt[35]. Auf dessen einen Seite zielt eine sitzende Figur, wohl der *pater*, mit einem Bogen auf eine Person, deren Hände gefesselt sind – eine Mutprobe also. Es lag nahe, die Mithräen einmal nach vorhandenen Pfeilspitzen zu überprüfen, und man wird bei der Suche auch tatsächlich fündig[36]. Die in Abb. 10 gezeigten Beispiele (Nr. 2, 5 und 10) stammen aus Künzing, Pfaffenhofen[37] und

8 *Mithräum von Pfaffenhofen (Pons Aeni). Sigillatabecher mit Tauroktoniedarstellung in Barbotine (Höhe: 27 cm)* (nach Garbsch 1985, Taf. C).

9 *Mithräum von Capua. Wandfresko mit Initiationsszene* (nach Merkelbach 1984, 288, Abb. 30).

[31] Eine hilfreiche Basis stellt der Aufsatz von Flügel & Obmann 1992 dar. Allerdings sind dort die ziemlich häufig vorkommenden Messer nicht in den Katalog aufgenommen. Zu Heddernheim III vgl. z.B. Huld-Zetsche 1986, 32.

[32] *De corona militis*, 15.

[33] Cämmerer 1986, 508; Schwertheim 1979, 29.

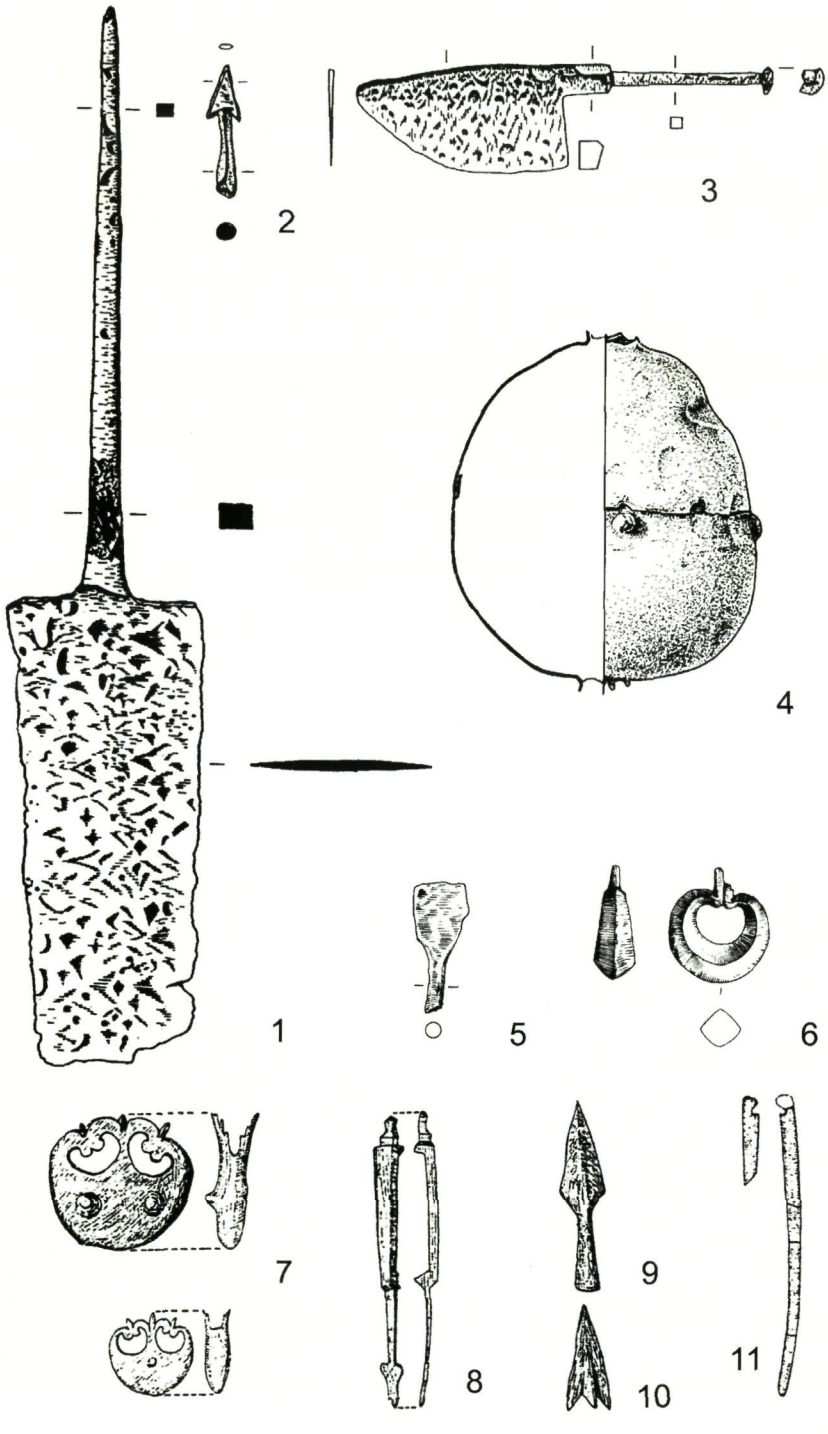
[34] Künzing: Schmotz 2000, 134 f.; Pfaffenhofen: Garbsch 1985, 435 f., 438 f.; London: Shepherd 1998, 160 f. (Nr. VIII.55).

[35] Für die Abb. verweise ich auf den Beitrag von I. Huld-Zetsche in diesem Band.

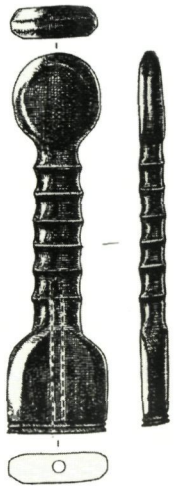
[36] Garbsch 1985, 438; Schleiermacher 1928, 50; 54; Schmotz 2000, 134.

[37] Die Tüllenpfeilspitze Nr. 7 zeigt allerdings eine ungewöhnliche Form; von Flügelansätzen ist z.B. nichts zu erkennen. Ob es sich hier ebenfalls um eine 'Sonderform' handelte oder das Stück einfach stark korrodiert ist, könnte, wenn überhaupt, nur eine Prüfung des Originals erhellen.

10 *Waffenfunde aus verschiedenen Mithräen (Maßstab jeweils 1:3, außer Nr. 4 [2:3] und 11 [1:9]).*
1: Schwert mit langer Griffangel (Fe). Künzing.
2: Pfeilspitze (Fe). Künzing.
3: Messer mit sehr breiter Klinge (Fe). Künzing.
4: Bronzehülse eines Schwertknaufs. Pfaffenhofen.
5. Tüllenpfeilspitze (Fe). Pfaffenhofen.
6: Griffende (Bz) eines Ringknaufschwerts. Pfaffenhofen.
7: Ortbänder (Bz). Stockstadt.
8: Schwertriemenhalter (Bz). Stockstadt.
9: Lanzenspitze (Fe). Stockstadt.
10: Dreiflügelige Pfeilspitze (Fe). Stockstadt.
11: Reflexbogenversteifungen (Bein). Stockstadt.
Zusammenstellung mit Abb. aus Schmotz 2000, 135, Abb. 15; Garbsch 1985, 436, Abb. 29, 439, Abb. 30 und Flügel & Obmann 1992: 69.



11 *Schwert- oder Dolchgriff aus Gagat, glänzend poliert. London (Walbrook)* (nach Shepherd 1998, 160, Fig. 176 (VIII.55).



Stockstadt, und ich glaube hier auch an eine beträchtliche Dunkelziffer bei älteren Grabungen. Aus Stockstadt ebenso wie aus London (Abb. 10: 11) kennen wir sogar Überreste von Reflexbogenversteifungen[38]. Auch wenn die Materialmenge zugegebenermaßen noch klein ist, scheint mir das über bloßen Zufall hinauszugehen.

In den Initiationskontext gehören nach den literarischen Quellen auch Gruben, was auch immer die Initianden in diesen tun mußten. Realistisch vorstellbar scheinen mir am ehesten rituelle Reinigungen. Die in den verschiedenen Anlagen festgestellten Grubenbefunde sind allerdings polysemantisch[39], denn Gruben sind auch und m.E. sogar in der Mehrzahl der Fälle als Sammelstelle für Speisereste und Niederlegung von Bau- und anderen Opfern (sog. 'heiligem Müll') verwendet worden. Sie zeigen sowohl in ihrer Form als auch in ihrer Lage ein sehr weites Spektrum: sehr flache Gruben gab es beispielsweise im Mittelgang des Hauptraumes im Heiligtum von Pfaffenhofen: in Grube 2 und 3 hätte immerhin ein Mensch Platz gehabt[40]. In einen ähnlichen Kontext könnten auch nischenförmige Aussparungen am vorderen Ende eines der seitlichen Podien gehören, wie sie z.B. in Martigny begegnen[41]. Für genauere Aufschlüsse würde sich ohne Zweifel die Erstellung eines

[38] Flügel & Obmann 1992, 69; Shepherd 1998, 176 (Nr. IX.52). Ein weiteres Stück vom gegenüberliegenden Walbrook-Ufer (Nr. II.125) kann nicht mit dem Mithräum verbunden werden, da es aus viel älterem Kontext stammt. Ich danke J. Bird für Hinweise und Diskussion.

[39] Zum Problem schon Huld-Zetsche 1986, 16.

[40] Garbsch 1985, 360.

[41] Anderes Beispiel: Nida-Heddernheim (Huld-Zetsche 1986, 27 f.; in dieser Nische stand die Statuette eines löwenköpfigen Aion). In der ersten Phase des Londoner Mithräums war am vorderen Ende des einen Seitenflügels ein Brunnen eingelassen, Shepherd 1998, 62 (Fig. 61), 70, 73 (Fig. 87).

'Grubenkatalogs' unter Berücksichtigung der jeweils darin getätigten Funde außerordentlich lohnen.

Für die Initiationsriten stellt sich außerdem die Frage, inwieweit sie in den Vorräumen und inwieweit im eigentlichen Kultraum stattfanden. Auch hier ist mangels klarer Indizien viel Raum für Spekulationen. Denkbar sind z.B. vorbereitende Riten im Vorraum und der abschließende Höhepunkt der Prüfung im Speläum selbst, im Kreise der bereits Eingeweihten sozusagen. Immerhin stammen die bisher gefundenen Pfeilspitzen alle aus dem Vorderteil des Hauptraums[42], aber das kann ebensogut Zufall sein und sollte vorerst nicht überbewertet werden[43]. Hinsichtlich möglicher Einweihungsriten im Vorraum interessant ist ein Befund im Mithräum von Carrawburgh am Hadrianswall, der über mehrere Phasen hinweg in seiner Entwicklung verfolgbar ist (Abb. 12). Eine Herdstelle hatte ihren festen Platz unmittelbar links vom Eingang, und zumindest eine Zeitlang lag ihr gegenüber, an die Trennwand zum Hauptraum angelehnt, eine mit dünnen Steinplatten bedeckte Konstruktion, die fast an eine Grabkiste erinnert und welche die Ausgräber 'ordeal pit' nannten[44]. Auch hier war Platz genug für eine Person – man hat das auch ausprobiert! –, und Richmond und Gillam schrieben dazu: ›So disposed and covered with stone slabs, an initiate could be subjected to the ordeals of heat and cold which were another part of the Mithraic tests of endurance, to which may be added terror, here induced by being in effect entombed‹. Das mag zutreffen, doch in dieser Form hätte das wie erwähnt nur während kurzer Zeit stattfinden können. Anstelle der Steinkiste wurde in einer nächsten Phase ein schmales Bänkchen – man müßte es vielleicht eher Absatz nennen – an der Trennwand angebracht.[45]

Anderen gelegentlich in den Vorräumen gefundenen Einbauten wurde bisher in der Forschung dagegen kaum Beachtung geschenkt, vielleicht auch weil sie alles andere als ein einheitliches Bild schaffen. Im Mithräum von Mundelsheim, dessen Grundrißtyp mit dem von Biesheim eng vergleichbar ist, deuten im äußeren Vorraum ein Messer, eine Schöpfkelle und ein Siebgefäß auf Essenszubereitung, doch findet sich in einer Ecke auch eine gemauerte Struktur (Abb. 13), die stellenweise gut 5 Lagen hoch erhalten ist. Eine Herdstelle kommt dafür kaum in Frage, eher denkt man an einen Altar[46]. Eine ebenfalls rätselhafte, aber in gewissen Punkten vielleicht vergleichbare Einrichtung ist im Sta. Prisca-Mithräum auf dem Aventin in Rom zumindest teilweise erhalten[47]. Hier ist eine Ecke des Vorraums durch eine gewinkelte Mauer

[42] Siehe Fn. 36.

[43] Eher zu Eingangsriten, aber vielleicht ebenfalls in einen Initiationskontext, in diesem Falle sowohl in wörtlichem als auch übertragenem Sinne als 'rites de passage' deutbar, könnten die Vertiefungen am Eingang zum heiligen Bezirk von Martigny (Wiblé 1995, 4; mit derselben Deutung) bzw. in den Hauptraum in Bornheim-Sechtem (Ulbert, in diesem Band) gehören.

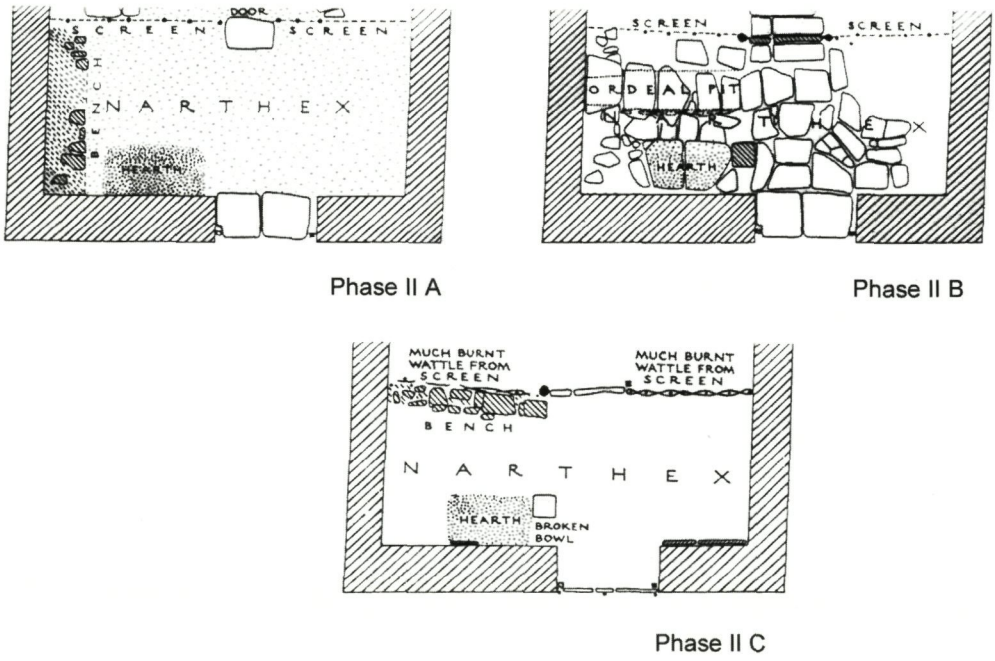
[44] Richmond & Gillam 1951, 17-21.

[45] Bereits in der Bauphase, die der Installation der Steinkiste vorangeht (s. Abb. 11), war an die vom Eingang aus gesehen linke Wand des Vorraums ein niedriges 'Steinbänkchen' angebaut (Richmond & Gillam 1951, 14), das man aber vielleicht ebenfalls als Ablagefläche interpretieren kann. Jedenfalls befindet es sich für eine Sitzgelegenheit zu nahe an der Feuerstelle. Deutet man die drei zeitlich aufeinanderfolgenden Einbauten in dieser Weise, geht man allerdings von einem in den Grundzügen gleichbleibenden Funktionszusammenhang aus, der so nicht sicher beweisbar ist.

[46] Vorbericht: Planck 1989. Ich danke Prof. D. Planck sehr für die freundliche Beantwortung meiner verschiedenen Fragen und die Erlaubnis einer Einsichtnahme der Grabungsakten.

[47] Vermaseren & Van Essen 1965, 137 f.

12 *Mithräum von Carrawburgh (Brocolitia). Gegenüberstellung der Befunde im Vorraum der Phasen II A–C* (nach Richmond & Gillam 1951, 10, Fig. 3, 17, Fig. 4 und 23, Fig. 5).



13 *Mithräum von Mundelsheim. Ansicht. Im Vordergrund: Vorraum mit der besprochenen Struktur* (nach Planck 1989, 180, Abb. 131).

abgegrenzt; die freigelassene Öffnung wird gegen die Wand hin von einem rot verputzten Mörtelblock eingegrenzt und -geengt (Abb. 14-15). Bei diesem handelt es sich zweifellos um einen Altar, denn die Reste einer wannenförmigen Vertiefung sind auf der Oberseite noch zu sehen. An die hintere Mauer angelehnt ist ein etwa 0.5 m hohes Podium; darüber an der Wand befand sich auf gelb verputztem Hintergrund eine noch in Resten erhaltene reliefierte Figur, die Vermaseren und van Essen als Giganten, d.h. als Repräsentanten eines vorangegangenen Weltzeitalters, deuteten. Wozu diente dieser Einbau? An blutige Opfer ist, obwohl sich eine solche Deutung gelegentlich in der Literatur findet, nicht zu denken: dagegen spricht der farbige Verputz an Altar und Rückwand und überhaupt die Gesamtstruktur des Einbaus. Auf dem Podium hat man sich viel eher aufgestellte Votivgaben zu denken. Eine Interpretation als Becken zur rituellen Reinigung entfällt ebenfalls; hingegen erscheinen vorbereitende Riten unmittelbar neben Altar und Götterfigur zumindest nicht ausgeschlossen[48]. Interessant schließlich die Notiz, daß in diesem Bereich auch eine Konzentration von Geflügelknochen vorlag, die nicht nur im Zusammenhang mit dem Kultmahl, sondern auch im weiteren Kontext von Opferhandlungen zu sehen sind.

Mit der Auswahl der gezeigten Beispiele war die Absicht verbunden, insbesondere zwei Spezifika des Gegenstandes vor Augen zu führen: einerseits die faszinierende Vielfalt an Befunden und Funden, die uns jedes einzelne Mithräum in seiner ganz charakteristischen Eigenart präsentiert, andererseits aber auch, und dies vor allem im Zusammenhang mit Initiationsriten, die starke Ausschnitthaftigkeit des Bildes, über das wir verfügen. Daß wir trotz dieses Umstands noch lange nicht am Ende unserer Möglichkeiten stehen, dafür sind die an der Konferenz in Tienen neu bekannt gemachten und in diesem Band gesammelten Resultate eindrückliches Zeugnis. Auch für die Zukunft bin ich überzeugt, daß durch die Setzung neuer, zusätzlicher Schwerpunkte schon während der Ausgrabungstätigkeit ein weiterer Zuwachs an interpretierbaren Daten erreicht werden kann. Dazu müssten gehören: eine noch genauere Dokumentation der räumlichen Verteilung der Kleinfunde durch häufigeres Einmessen, vor allem in den kleineren Raumteilen, für welche vornehmlich eine Spezialfunktion anzunehmen ist; ferner eine genaue Dokumentation aller Einbaustrukturen und Gruben samt Inhalt, und, in der Wichtigkeit nicht nachstehend, auch – wenn immer möglich – der unmittelbaren bis näheren Umgebung des Gebäudes. Über mögliche Wechselbeziehungen ist in dieser Hinsicht ja noch so gut wie nichts bekannt. Der Wert von quantitativen Analysen auch auf den ersten Blick unspektakulärer Fundmengen wie von Keramik und Knochen kann in Zukunft nicht mehr unterschätzt werden. Es hängt weitgehend von den Gliedern am Anfang der Arbeitskette ab, wie schnell die Menge an interpretierbaren Daten weiter zunimmt, und auf diese Grundlage sind wir angewiesen, wenn wir künftig noch besser in der Lage sein wollen, etwa regionen- und zeitspezifische Keramikvergesellschaftungen in einem übergeordneten Rahmen funktionell zu beurteilen, was wohl eines der dringendsten Desiderate bleiben wird. Überhaupt kann als einer der Schlüssel zur Bestimmung der Natur des Mithraskults die Frage bezeichnet werden, in welchen Ausstattungsformen wir austauschbare Puzzleteil (gemäß den im ersten Kapitel angestellten Überlegungen) im unendlich farbenprächtigen Gesamtphänomen Mithraskult sehen dürfen. In diesem Initiationsritual stehen wir zweifellos noch in den Anfängen.

ABSTRACT

In diesem Beitrag werden anhand einiger Beispiele Möglichkeiten erörtert, wie Strukturbefunde und Funde in römischen Mithrasheiligtümern (und in der unmittelbaren Umgebung von diesen) in umfassenderer Weise als bisher geschehen auf ihre Funktionalität hin untersucht werden können. Erhofft wird daraus eine Erhellung weiterer Details der komplexen und angesichts der besonderen Quellenlage insgesamt schwer faßbaren Handlungsabläufe im Kultgeschehen.

Im ersten Teil wird ein Modellvorschlag mit einer Dreiteilung von Elementen, wie sie in Mithrasheiligtümern begegnen, in Basis- bzw. Grundelemente, austauschbare Elemente gleicher Funktion und optionale Zusatzelemente vorgestellt. Eine derartige (in den Einzelzügen noch zu verfeinernde) Klassifikation könnte in Zukunft als Ausgangspunkt dienen für die Diskussion, welche Elemente überhaupt als konstitutiv für ein Mithräum bezeichnet werden können. In einem zweiten Teil wird das auch in ikonographischen Darstellungen

[48] Vgl. auch Fn. 43.

festgehaltene Kultmahl (inklusive Vorbereitung) als Ausgangspunkt für eine vergleichende Betrachtung von räumlicher Aufteilung und von Einbaustrukturen insbesondere in den Vorräumen verschiedener Mithräen verwendet. Dabei zeigt sich, daß in diesen je nach Anlagengröße mit einer Überlagerung ganz verschiedener Funktionen zu rechnen ist. Zentral in ihrer Aussagekraft sind aber selbstverständlich die Kleinfunde. Um über allgemeine Feststellungen (Dominanz des Trinkgeschirrs, Streuung des Materials in Koch-, Anrichte- und Ess-/Trinkgeschirr, typische Spektren des Knochenmaterials) hinauszugelangen, ist allerdings eine genaue Beurteilung des Fundbilds im Moment der Ausgrabung im Hinblick auf seine Genese unumgänglich. Einige reflektierte Szenarien zeigen die Vielfalt an Möglichkeiten, mit denen zu rechnen ist; für die nachfolgenden Interpretationen sind diese jeweiligen Gegebenheiten von grundlegender Relevanz. In einem letzten Teil schließlich werden mögliche archäologische Zeugnisse für Initiationsriten vorgestellt, die ein ebenso vielfältiges wie vieldeutiges Bild ergeben. Ein bisher nicht vollumfänglich ausgeschöpftes Informationspotential könnte in den regelmäßig gemachten Waffenfunden mit teilweise bemerkenswerten Formen liegen, außerdem in einigen der grubenartigen Vertiefungen in den Kulträumen oder in deren Eingangsbereich. Zur Untermauerung der hier vertretenen Hypothese, daß auch Vorräume für die Durchführung von Initiationsriten genutzt wurden, werden drei Beispiele von Anlagen mit auffälligen Einbauten (Carrawburgh, Mundelsheim, S. Prisca/Rom) vorgestellt.

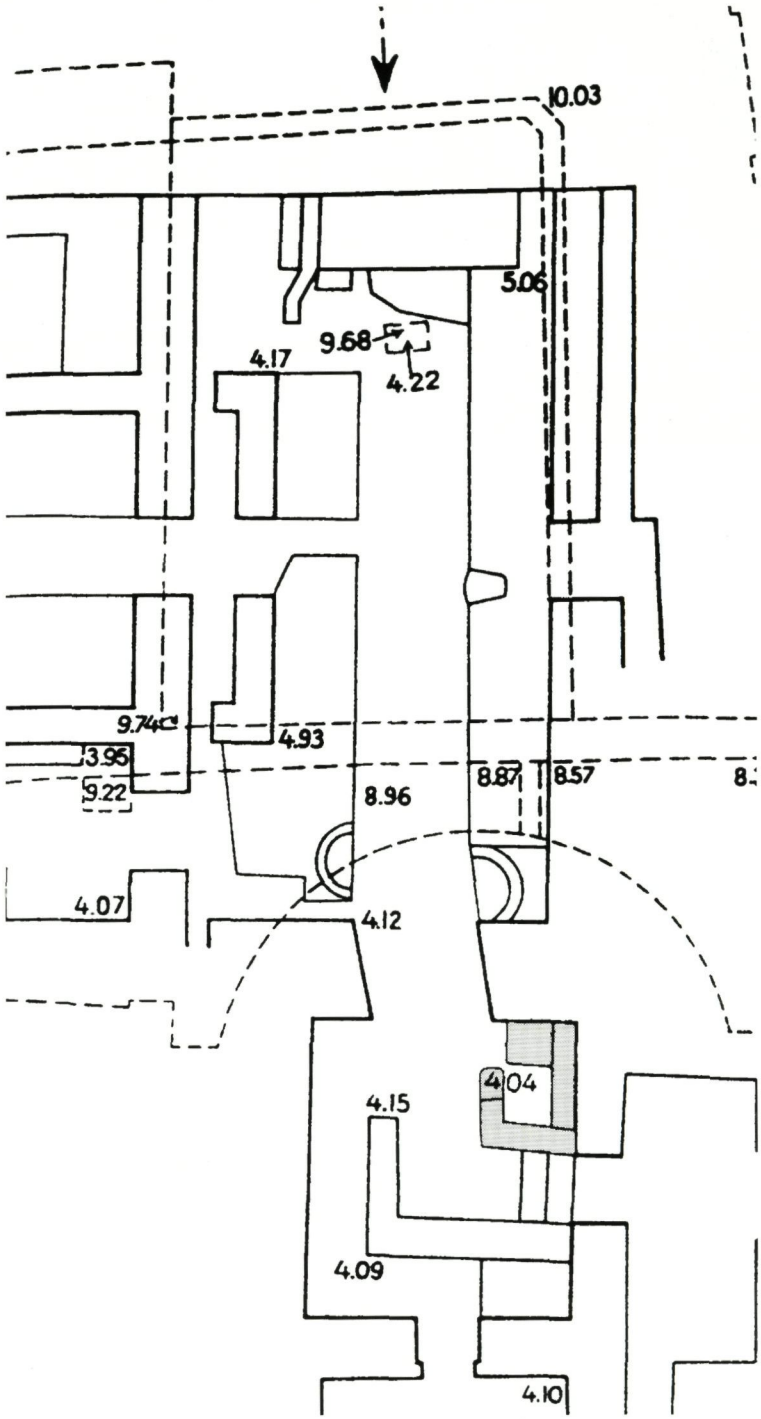
In allen angesprochenen Bereichen zeigt sich augenfällig die Wichtigkeit genauer quantitativer Analysen, wie sie erst in neuester Zeit in die Fundbearbeitung miteingeschlossen sind. Mit diesen dürften nach Ansicht des Verfassers in absehbarer Zukunft noch beträchtliche interpretative Fortschritte zu erreichen sein.

Samenvatting

In deze bijdrage wordt aan de hand van voorbeelden onderzocht hoe de structuren en de vondsten in en rond Romeinse Mithrastempels naar hun functionaliteit onderzocht kunnen worden. Daarbij wordt, aan de hand van de studie van bepaalde details van de complexen in combinatie met het bijzondere bronnenmateriaal, gehoopt klaarheid te scheppen in het moeilijk te vatten verloop van het cultusgebeuren.

In het eerste deel wordt een model voorgesteld waarbij de samenstellende elementen van *mithraea* in drie delen worden opgesplitst: de basiselementen, de uitwisselbare elementen met eenzelfde functie en de optionele elementen. Een dergelijke (in bepaalde gevallen nog te verfijnen) classificatie kan in de toekomst als uitgangspunt dienen voor de discussie over welke elementen als wezenlijk voor een *mithraeum* kunnen bestempeld worden. In een tweede deel wordt het cultusmaal (inclusief de voorbereiding), dat ook in iconografische voorstellingen een belangrijke rol speelt, als uitgangspunt gebruikt voor een vergelijkende studie van de ruimtelijke opdeling en van de toegevoegde struc-

14 *Mithräum unter S. Prisca, Rom (Aventin). Grundriß (Maßstab 1:200). Die im Text besprochene Struktur im Vorraum ist grau hervorgehoben* (nach Vermaseren & Van Essen 1965, Plan I).



15 *Mithräum unter S. Prisca, Rom (Aventin). Struktur im Vorraum* (Photo M. Roth, Zürich. Veröffentlicht mit Bewilligung der Soprintendenza Archeologica, Rom).

turen, die vooral in de voorhal van de verschillende *mithraea* voorkomen. Een bijkomende moeilijkheid is dat een vertrek in verschillende periodes verschillende functies kan gehad hebben. Voor de functionele interpretatie van de ruimtelijke indeling van *mithraea* staan natuurlijk de vondsten. Om algemene vaststellingen (de dominantie van drinkservies, de verspreiding van kook-, opslag -en tafelservies, de typische spectra van dierenbeen) mogelijk te maken is alleszins een correcte registratie noodzakelijk van de context van de vondsten op het moment van de opgraving. Dit met het oog op de reconstructie van de genese van de contexten. Enkele mogelijke scenario's tonen de vele mogelijkheden aan met dewelke rekening moet gehouden worden. Voor de interpretatie zijn de desbetreffende gegevens van fundamenteel belang. In het laatste deel tenslotte worden mogelijke archeologische bronnen voor initiatieriten voorgesteld, die een grote verscheidenheid aan interpretaties openlaten. Een totnogtoe onvolledig verzamelde bron aan informatie zijn de vondsten van wapens, vaak met merkwaardige vormen, alsook in de uitgravingen in de cultusruimte of de ingang ervan. Ter ondersteuning van de hier naar voor gebrachte hypothese dat ook de ingangshal voor de uitvoering van de initiatieriten werd gebruikt, zullen drie voorbeelden van speciale constructies in deze plaatsen (Carrawburgh, Mundelsheim, S. Prisca/ Rome) voorgesteld worden.

In de besproken toepassingsgebieden valt het belang van correcte kwantitatieve analyse op, zoals ze recent vaak in vondstverwerkingsrapporten toegepast wordt. Met deze informatie zal naar de mening van de auteur in de nabije toekomst nog belangrijke vooruitgang geboekt worden bij de interpretatie van de cultus.

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The *Mithraeum* in Tienen (Belgium): small finds and what they can tell us

Marleen MARTENS

with contributions by Brigitte Cooremans and Koen Deforce

Methodological framework

The subject of this article is the finds deposit of the temple for Mithras excavated in the Roman Small Town of Tienen. At the time of excavation in August of 1998 the building remains and the pits were recognised as special but no identification could yet be attributed to the deposit. It was not until the wintertime, while cleaning the finds and studying the plan of the building, that it became clear that we were dealing with a cult complex. After a thorough study of the literature the identification of the deposit became clear: we were dealing with the remains of a building dedicated to the god Mithras. A detailed study of the different categories of finds following a specific methodology clearly showed that ideological imperatives had shaped the archaeological record. It revealed that the series of pits next to the *Mithraeum* were filled in a structured way with objects directly related to specific cult activities. In fact, the finds proved to show so much important evidence for a variety of practises in and around the temple complex and the organisation of the rituals that the search for comparisons with similar deposits became of paramount importance.

After initial research of recently-discovered *Mithraea* and contact with specialists of Roman mithraism the decision was made to organise the "*International conference: Roman mithraism. The evidence of the small finds*". The aim of the conference was to put forward some questions of how and why various events in the Mithras cult might have occurred and to develop a methodological framework to interpret them. The evidence evoked for other *Mithraea* and from related finds studies certainly helped us to interpret some of our finds and to formulate an approach to a theoretical reconstruction of Mithraic events. It became clear that finds evidence from other *Mithraea* showed many common elements but also many differences. The study of the Tienen *Mithraeum* is an interesting case because a large area around it has been excavated and a number of elements of the socio-economical character of the town are already known.

The article consists of six parts. First we will describe the Roman Small Town of Tienen and the previous research carried out there. In a second section we will invoke the larger context of the town in which the *Mithraeum* is situated. Thirdly we will describe the archaeological remains of the building complex. Fourthly we will give an overview of the different finds categories. Fifthly, we will offer an overall interpretation of the finds and features of the *Mithraeum* in Tienen. In a sixth and final part we would like to reflect on future study methodologies and perspectives to understand this most important part of human experience of religious life.

1 The Small Town of Tienen: previous research

It was not until the nineteen seventies that a first systematic study of the stray finds of the vicus of Tienen was conducted. This study offered quite an accurate description of the general characteristics of the Roman Small Town[1]. Since the nineteen eighties three excavation campaigns yielded information on the development of the infrastructure of the town. During the first campaign in 1982 a team of the museum of Tienen excavated a Claudian cellar, a third century pottery kiln and other features in the southern part of the town[2]. In 1995-1996 a team of the Institute for the Archaeological Heritage of Flanders directed by Alain Vanderhoeven and Geert Vynckier excavated an area in the western part of the town[3]. On both sides of a pebbled road leading to the Small Town of Elewijt a granary of a minimum of 60 m long and a bathhouse of the Flavian period were laid out[4]. In the beginning of the second century these buildings were demolished and replaced by houses with a common portico facing the street. Around the houses pits with iron slag and waste from copper alloy production were found. Other pits contained waste from the processing of animal bone into secondary products like marrow or fat. Apart from its obvious residential purpose this area clearly also fulfilled both craft and commercial functions during the second and third centuries.

1 Mertens 1972.
2 Thomas 1983.
3 Vanderhoeven *et al.* 2002, 133-160.
4 Vanderhoeven *et al.* 2001, 13-33

2 The "Grijpenveld" excavations: a *Mithraeum* in the southwestern periphery of the Roman Small Town

The *vicus* of Tienen is situated in the fertile loess area of the *Civitas Tungrorum*, in the province of *Germania Inferior*. The town was founded on the road from Cologne to Boulogne, some 30 kilometres west of the civitas capital Tongeren (fig. 1). The settlement stretches out over a plateau, bordered on 3 sides by small rivers. The surface of the settlement can now be estimated at 60 ha and it can therefore be considered to be quite a large Small Town. The economic base of the town was agriculture and crafts. Recent research has shown that the vicus of Tienen was probably the most important pottery production centre of the Civitas[5]. Alongside ceramic production, workshops for copper alloy, iron and glass have also been identified. The town was inhabited between the middle of the first century and the end of the third century AD, and thereafter with a much-reduced intensity of occupation until the middle of the fourth century[6].

Since 1997 an extensive rescue excavation[7] of an area of approximately 20 ha has been carried out in the southern periphery of the modern town of Tienen on the site called "Grijpenveld". This area covers most of the southern and western periphery of the Roman Small Town and the complete south-western Gallo-Roman cemetery. In the same area features of the Late Neolithic, the Early and Late Iron Age and the Medieval Period have also been excavated.

At the time of writing, at least 3500 features of the Roman settlement and more than 1100 graves from the cemetery have been excavated. Although few of the contexts have been studied thoroughly yet, a general examination has revealed much new information on the urban development of the town area in which the *Mithraeum* is situated. The knowledge of the broader context of this area and its historical development are important for the understanding of the role and meaning of the cult in the town. Furthermore a comparison of the positions of *Mithraea* in their towns would be interesting as a way of better understanding the place and character of the Mithras cult in the Roman society in general.

The *Mithraeum* of the vicus of Tienen (fig. 2: 1) was founded around the middle of the 3rd century AD next to a road (fig. 2: 2) in the south-western periphery of the town, about 100 m from the southern border of the cemetery (fig. 2: 6). Before the building of the *Mithraeum*, however, this part of the town saw various stages of development.

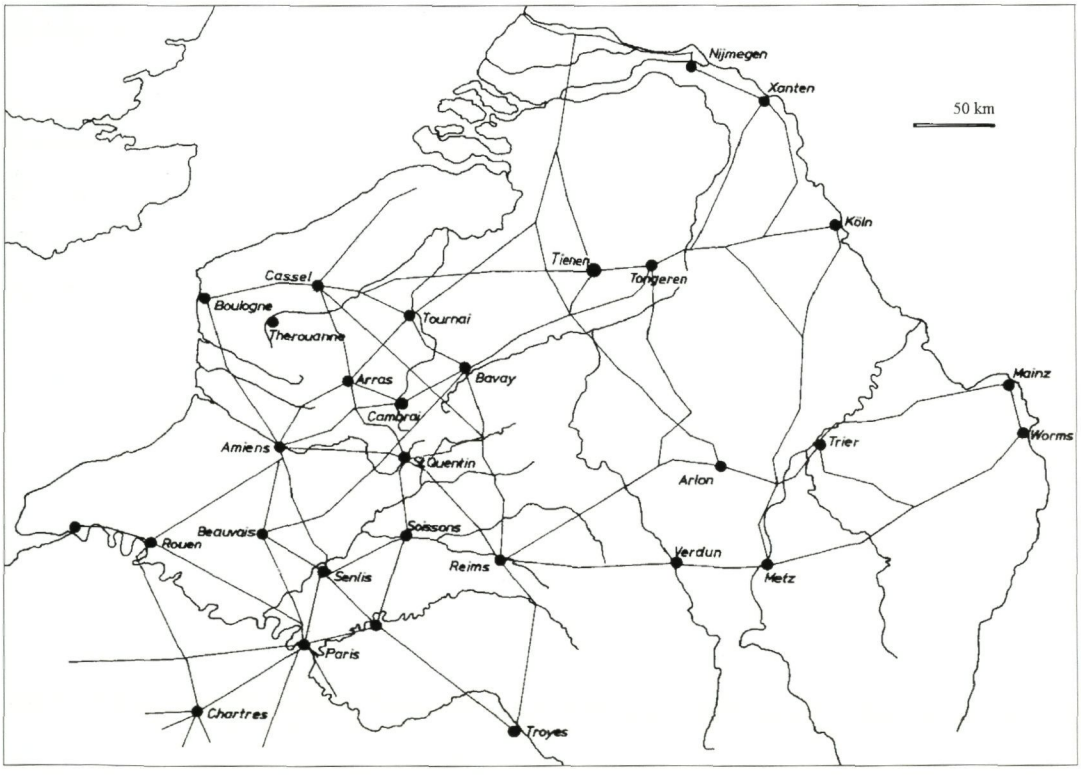
In the Tibero-Claudian period when the vicus was founded this area was dominated by a large ditched enclosure of 60 m by 60 m[8] (fig. 2: 3). The enclosure had an entrance on the north side, leading to a road and facing the centre of the town. In the north-western corner of the enclosure a building of 25 m by 9 m (fig. 2: 4) was situated. What is remarkable is that apart from some horse teeth the whole ditch was empty except a very rich deposit on either side of the entrance. This consisted of a very dense layer of burnt clay, charcoal,

[5] Martens & Willems 2002, 333-338.

[6] Martens *et al* in press.

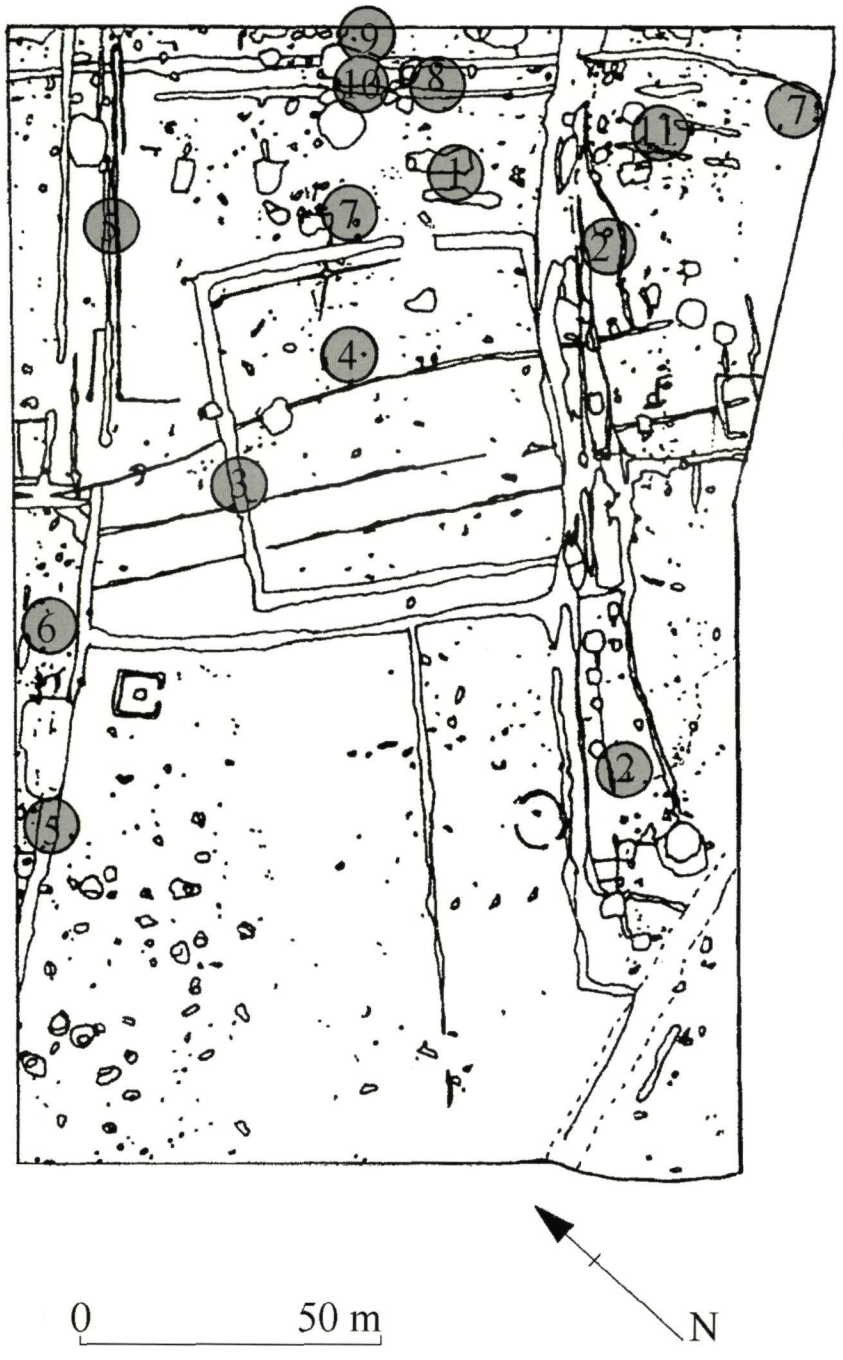
[7] The "Grijpenveld" excavations are carried out by the Institute for the Archaeological Heritage of Flanders and the Museum Het Toreke (City of Tienen), with financial aid of the Gewestelijke Ontwikkelingsmaatschappij voor Vlaams Brabant.

[8] Martens *et al.* 2002, 401-402.



1 *Roman road map with location of the vicus Tienen.*

2 *Excavation plan: 1.* Mithraeum*; 2. Road; 3. enclosure ditch; 4. Building; 5. Road; 6. Cemetery; 7. pottery workshop; 8-10 pit with ritual deposition; 11. parcel of land within palisade.*



burnt bone, a mass of ceramics and some small finds. In order to study the deposition process of the material the complete layer was wet-sieved per square meter. Because of the special nature of this collection we will summarise the finds. The ceramics can be divided into two groups by function: table ware and ceramic containers. The table ware consists of samian ware from Italy and southern Gaul, fine ware from the workshops at Cologne or Neuss in the Rhineland, *terra nigra* goblets, bowls, bottles and plates, *terra rubra* beakers and flagons in local ware. The category of ceramic containers consists of *dolia*, "*kurkurnen*"[9] and, thanks to the sieving operation, no fewer than 32,862 fragments of salt containers we have could be collected, corresponding to a weight of 3,986 kg. Among the other objects we found fragments of bracelets and glass beads, half of an intaglio in 3-colored glass with traces of gold, 4 *fibulae*, a palmette in copper alloy, 10 Augustan copper alloy coins and a large number of iron objects which include 250 fragments of shoe nails. The uniform layer and the distribution of the material in the ditch indicate that we are dealing with a single-event deposit. The presence of only table ware and ceramic containers seems to indicate that we are dealing with the refuse of a feast. The creators of this complex must have had contacts with many regions of the Roman Empire: for the "kurkurnen" with the Civitas of the Treveri, the salt came from the Menapii or Morini, the fine ware cups from the Ubii and the coins, terra sigillata and an intaglio from the Italy[10]. The builders must also have had some political or economical power to be able to organise such a labour-intensive enterprise. Some items among the finds could be dated a few generations earlier than the rest of the material, such as the Italian sigillata, the Augustan coins, the La Tène bracelets. These could be heirlooms, or reminders of certain events in the past. We have good reason to believe that this enclosure was a large ceremonial complex, perhaps related to the foundation of the town. In any case the space occupied by this complex was left untouched during the rest of the history of the town, while all the area around it has been in use intensively. More than two centuries later the *Mithraeum* was laid out immediately next to this enclosure.

In the Flavian period the settlement expanded towards the edge of the plateau. Two roads were laid out from the centre of the settlement to the south and parallel with the side-ditches of the Claudian enclosure. The westernmost road (fig. 2: 5) was excavated over a distance of 400 m. Once outside the settlement this road forms the eastern border of the cemetery (fig. 2: 6). The cemetery was in use from the Tibero-Claudian period until the beginning of the 4th century. The easternmost road (fig. 2: 2) makes a 90 degrees turn to the eastern periphery of the vicus. As early as the Flavian period pottery workshops (fig. 2: 7) were installed next to each of the roads [11]. In both cases the workshops contained two kilns with a common stokehole[12]. Around the ovens pits were filled with production waste. In the second century craft activities continued to take place in this area. A glass production workshop with a oven for glass-making was installed next to the easternmost road. Throughout the area a multitude of pits from the 2nd and 3rd century have been excavated. Most of the contexts have not yet been studied. During the excavation, however, some of the deposits in these pits were especially eye-catching. Some examples of these special deposits show that this quarter was

[9] Kurkurn is a dutch word for handmade pottery with a lime-rich tempering, in Germany they are referred to as *Halterner Kochtöpfe*. *ibid.* 403, fig. 11.

[10] Martens 2002, 401-412.

[11] Martens 2001, 117-119.

[12] Hartoch & Martens 2001, 29-39.

not only reserved to craft activities: in one case a statue of Fortuna and a bowl with copper alloy objects were deposited on the bottom of a pit (fig. 2: 8). Nearby three mortaria were placed on the bottom of a deep shaft-shaped pit (fig. 2: 9). One context (fig. 2: 10) contains amongst other items the remains of 6 dog skeletons, several complete vessels, a statue base, coins and fibulae[13]. In the immediate surrounding of this pit another square shallow pit contained 3 complete dog skeletons and a horse skull. It is important to mention that in other parts of the town similar "ritual" deposits have been found but were not always recognised as such at the time [14].

In the beginning of the 3rd century this was clearly still an area of craft activities. At this moment the easternmost road had already been metalled several times with pebbles and refuse. On the western side of the street a temple for Mithras was erected on a parcel of land, bordered on at least 3 sides by a palisade (fig. 2: 1). On the opposite side of the road another lot of land was clearly marked by a palisade (fig. 2: 11). Within this property a series of pits with refuse were found, together with a sunken hut. About 100 m towards the Northeast of the *Mithraeum*, in the direction of the centre a contemporary pottery workshop was active[15]. In the third century the settlement was flourishing probably due to pottery production as the main economic activity of the town [16].

In summary, the *Mithraeum* was constructed on a plot of land next to a pebbled road at the edge of the crafts quarter, in an area that since the foundation of the town had a mix of craft and ritual or ceremonial functions not far from the cemetery. At Kunzing[17] and Krefeld-Gellep[18] the *Mithraea* were also erected between the settlement and the cemetery.

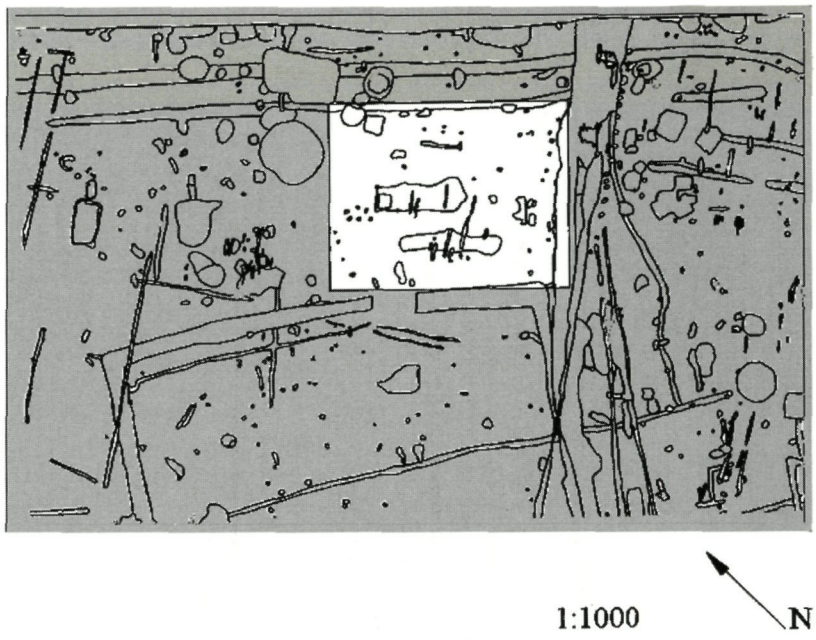
3 Structural remains of the *Mithraeum* complex

The Mithraeum

During the excavation in the summer of 1998 we registered two large rectangular brownish features, parallel to each other (fig. 3) and with a SE-NW orientation. The most eastern rectangular feature measures approximately 12 m to 3.5 m. The feature consisted of a 0.3 m thick layer of loam matrix with fragments of tiles, nails, some sherds and a few coins. During excavation the rectangular feature was divided in 10 sectors to facilitate the spatial analysis of the finds at a later time. Under this layer appeared the internal structure of the central aisle of the *Mithraeum*. Geomorphic research has shown that the central nave was situated approximately 1.2 m under the Roman ground level[19]. This means that we were dealing with more or less 0.9 m of erosion on top of the 0.3 m of plough-soil. From the timber-framed building only the floor level of the central aisle remained. Under the debris layer the spatial organisation of the central aisle of the *Mithraeum* became visible (fig. 4: 2). No floor layer of compacted loam could be distinguished. This could mean that the floor was cleaned very well after the last use or that the floor consisted of wooden boards. The latter option might explain the large quantity of nails in the debris layer.

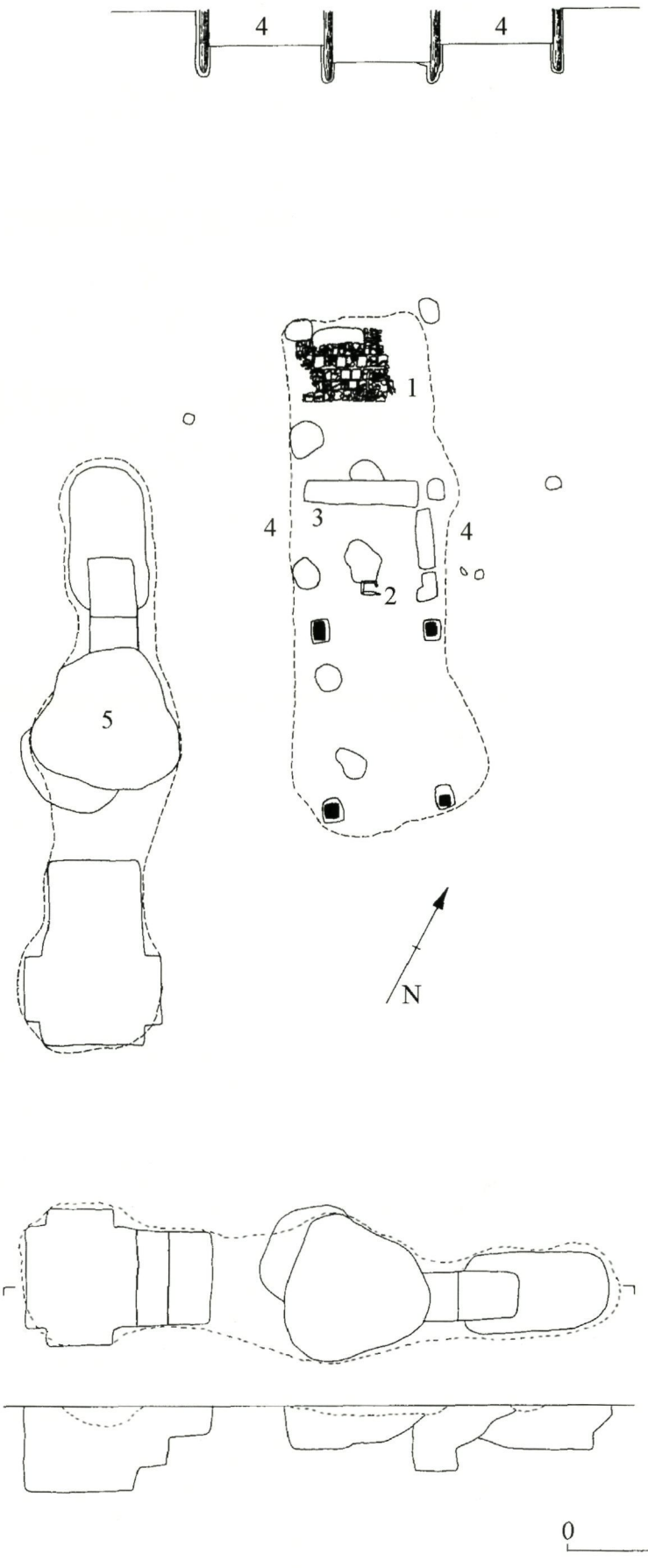
The central aisle is about 12 m long and 2 m wide. The focal point of the temple was situated at the north-western end of the nave immediately opposite the entrance. At this place, where the bull-killing area should be situated, a small floor of 2 m by 2 m made of square hypocaust tiles and roof tiles was laid out (fig. 4: 2, 1). This floor was probably the support of a votive altar or the cult relief itself. A similar platform made of stone slabs was discovered in the front part of the *Mithraeum* at Carrawburgh during the earliest phase[20]. The tiles of the platform of the *Mithraeum* at Tienen sagged towards the centre because they were laid over an older pit. This pit contained a part of a sword (fig. 11: 1), some fragments of tableware and coarse wares and some animal bone. The presence of a part of a sword in this pit must have a deep ritual significance since it is buried in the most sacred part of the temple. It can be interpreted as a pit in which certain elements were buried as a reminder of the consecration or renovation of the temple or of an other important event. Under the altars of the last phase of the *Mithraeum* at Carrawburgh a ritual deposit was found in a pit filled up with rubble. In this pit, a Castor beaker, along with pine cone fuel and the skulls and vertebrae of domestic fowl were buried together with a small tin cup[21]. In the middle of the nave at

3 *Plan of the* mithraeum *within its palisade.*



13 Martens *et al* in press.
14 Thomas 1983, 25.
15 *Ibid.* 18-23.
16 Martens & Willems 2002, 338.
17 Schmotz 2000, 111-144.
18 Reichman 1997, 21-24.
19 Vormezeele 1999, 110-116.
20 Richmond & Gillam 1951, 6, fig. 2.
21 *Ibid.* 35-36, fig 8, Pl. XXIIa.

4 *Plan of the* mithraeum:
4.1. Section.
4.2 Plan: 1. Floor;
2. Container; 3. Ditches;
4. Sidebenches, Pits.
4.3 Pits: section.



Tienen, a small container was made in a pit lined by tiles in vertical position (fig. 4: 2, 2). The container was filled with burnt material, possibly fuel for incense burners. At the moment of excavation, the container was covered with a tile. This construction was embedded in an older pit. The structure can probably not be interpreted with certainty as a hearth because there are no traces of fire on the tiles, nor on the loam surrounding the container. A similar container was also found in the first phase of the *Mithraeum* of Carrawburgh[22]. In the phase IIa of the *Mithraeum* in London a similar box, this time in wood, was set into the floor in the middle of the central nave. This box contained a filling of dark soil[23].

In the Tienen building two shallow gullies with a U-shaped profile were dug into the floor of the north-western part (fig. 4: 2, 3). One was laid against the north-eastern side bench. The other was dug perpendicular to it, cutting through an older pit. Their filling was a featureless light brown soil. The straight and right angled profile of these gullies support the assumption that they were originally board lined, but the wood was not conserved in the relatively acid loam. Presumably these channels were intended to contain water, but this is not certain. A similar wooden channel has been discovered in floor 3 of the London *Mithraeum*[24]. Features to contain water are often present in *Mithraea* and are possibly related to initiation rituals[25]. At the edge of the aisle we found the postholes from the posts that were supporting the roof structure while at the same time forming part of the construction of side benches (fig 4: 1; fig. 4: 2, 4). From the south-western row of posts, we registered three posts with an interval of a little more than 4 m. From the opposite row of posts we only found two rear posts. Similar side benches with a wattle and daub structure were found in the early phases of the *Mithraeum* of Carrawburgh[26], in Biesheim[27] and possibly in the first phase of Wiesloch[28]. The *Mithraeum* of Krefeld-Gellep[29] was a timber-framed building with very similar dimensions and construction methods.. In most *Mithraea*, fragments of painted wall plaster have been found. The discovery of a large amount of wall plaster in the pits next to our *Mithraeum* allowed us to reconstruct the general decoration of the interior. There were two kinds of plaster. One consisted of a layer of loam with a thin layer of fine plaster painted in green, red and white panels. The other had a thick pink mortar nucleus with white rendering. We know that the central nave of the *Mithraeum* was situated about 1.20 m under the Roman walking level. Since the side benches cannot have been that deep, we assume that also the exterior walls were partly under the Roman walking level. Therefore, it seems that the interior of the outer walls of the *Mithraeum* were rendered with the pink mortar painted white. The side benches had a fine layer of painted plaster over the loam matrix of the wattle and daub structure.

From the outer walls, only two postholes are conserved. The outside dimensions of the building were 12 m to 7.5 m. The Tienen *Mithraeum* can thus be considered to be average in size. Some of the postholes on the south-east side of the building may belong to an entrance hall. If this is the case, the entrance was only 1 m long and was probably situated on a more elevated level than the central aisle. There could have been an elevated niche for the bull-killing scene at the north-western end of the building that is missing due to erosion, as the side benches and the entrance hall. More probably there was no separate apse and the podia continued right up to the back wall where the tauroctonie was painted onto the wallplaster, as in the *Mithraea* of Mundelsheim[30], Friedberg and Krefeld-Gellep[31].

The pits

Parallel to the south-western wall of the *Mithraeum*, an almost rectangular dark brown/greyish feature of ca. 13.5 m x 2.5 m appeared (fig. 4: 2, 5). After the excavation of the first layer the feature could be divided into two structures. One pit was separated from a group of three pits with a common upper layer. The isolated pit had a cross-shaped top view and stairs leading to the bottom. In this pit, by far the most material was found. These four pits were dug at the same time and filled up simultaneously not long afterwards. The pits were probably dug to extract loam for the renovation of the temple. The series of four pits cut through an older pit with a horse skeleton lying on the bottom. It looks as though the people digging the pits stopped in order to leave the previously buried horse skeleton mostly intact. It is not certain the horse burial is connected to the temple of Mithras.

A palisade surrounded the complex, although not all of the posts were conserved, due to erosion (fig. 3). The palisade probably indicates the size of the property that belonged to the organisers of the cult. A similar palisade was discovered surrounding the *Mithraeum* at Martigny[32]. The importance of the presence of a palisade for the interpretation of the ceremonies will be discussed below.

4 The finds from the pits next to the *Mithraeum*

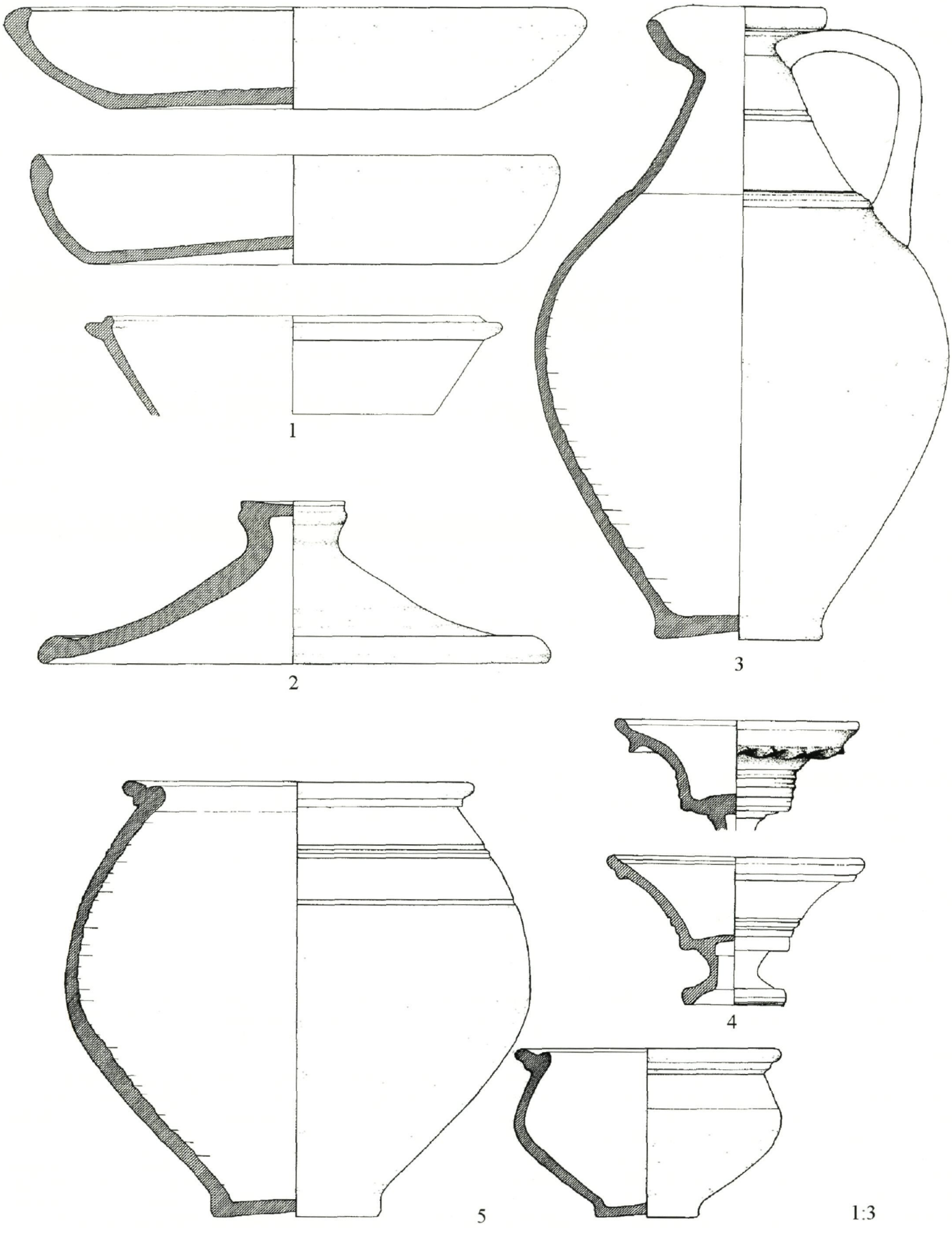
We will only discuss the finds from the pits next to the south-western wall of the *Mithraeum* (fig. 4: 2, 5; fig. 4:3) in a detailed way. The other features contained few finds and will only be mentioned in the interpretation. As we will show later with the contextual analysis we consider these pits to be filled at the same time with material from the same event, presumably a large feast.

Pottery

We divided the ceramics into categories of forms evidently corresponding with a certain function[33].

5 *Tienen pottery: 1. dishes; 2. lids; 3. Jugs; 4. Censers; cooking pots. Scale 1:3.*

[22] *Ibid.* 7.
[23] Sherperd 1998, 75, fig. 97.
[24] *Ibid.* 75, figs. 98, 99.
[25] Vermaseren 1974, 11, 14.
[26] Richmond & Gillam 1951, 1-93.
[27] Pétry & Kern 1978, 5-32.
[28] Hensen 1994, 84.
[29] Reichman 1997, 21-24.
[30] Planck 1990, 177-183.
[31] Reichman 1997, 22-23, Abb. 1-2.
[32] Wiblé 1995, 3.
[33] Thanks to the "Grijpenveldteam" and especially Igor Vandervonder for the help with sorting the ceramics.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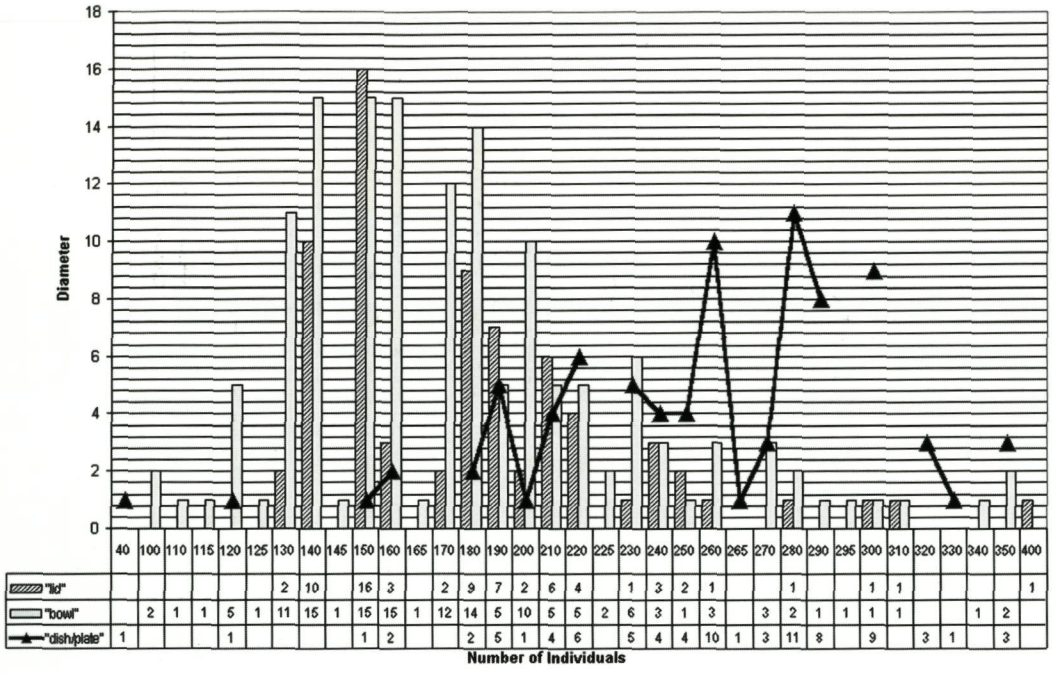


6 *Diagram with diameters of plates, lids and cooking pots.*

We have counted the minimum number of individuals (MNI) based on the rims, handles, bottoms and decoration. While sorting the ceramics per individual, minor differences in colour and composition of the same local fabric and different degrees of usage became apparent. All these elements were taken into consideration while interpreting the organisation of the event.

The highest MNI are counted within the locally-produced so-called smoked ware. This is the most commonly used ware in the small town of Tienen during the third century[34]. We have counted a minimum number of 80 jars (fig. 5: 3) with one handle and a spout. The function of this type of jar has been recently recognised. They were used for heating fluids on a fire[35]. Inside the jars we often found deposits of lime as if they had been used many times to boil water. Traces of soothing on the bottom of most of these jars also seem to confirm that function. Although these jars are all locally-produced the fabric differed in detail between the individuals. Another element that made the distinction between individuals easier was the shape of handles, rims and spouts with a changing number of lobes. Residue analysis has revealed the presence of some fatty acids from plant derived products inside the jars[36]. In total we have counted a MNI of 146 cooking vessels (fig. 5: 5). These are all produced locally in smoked ware. Residue-analysis revealed the presence of derivatives of fats from sheep and domestic fowl inside the samples of these pots, together with some vegetable fat[37]. The colour of the fabrics of these cooking pots varied sufficiently to distinguish the individuals. The pots also differed in the degree to which each one was used. Many showed burning marks on the bottom. The cooking pots and bowls show a wide variation in diameter from 100 mm to 350 mm with peaks around 140 mm and 190 mm (fig. 6).

The lids (fig. 5: 2) in smoked ware have a minimum number of individuals of 89. The diameters of the lids show the same variation as the cooking vessels from 130 mm to 400 mm (fig 6). Therefore, we can conclude that they probably were used to cover these cooking vessels.

We counted 85 dishes (fig. 5: 1). Most of the dishes had a polished exterior and interior surface and didn't have traces of fire on the bottom. The question remains whether these plates were used as table service or as cooking ware, or perhaps a combination of the two. The diameters varied between 40 mm and 350 mm with peaks between 260 mm and 300 mm. The colour of the fabrics of the plates varied widely between beige to pink up to almost brownish tones. Therefore it was also not very difficult to distinguish the different individuals.

The incense burners, or tazze, were also locally-produced[38] (fig. 5: 4). A minimum number of 103 individuals were found. In total six of these individuals have a rim with finger impressed frilling. This kind of decoration of the rim is typical though not exclusive for the Mithrascult. One censer in the shape of a cantharos is imported from the Rhine area and has a curved rim. Censers occur in other contexts in the small town of Tienen, mostly in ritual contexts[39]. The use of incense in ritual context is well known. Incense burners are regularly found in *Mithraea*[40]. J. Bird has studied the significance of incense for the Mithrascult and the connection with the initiation grade of the Lion in detail[41]. By comparison with the previously mentioned vessels the fragments of these incense burners were very difficult to sort per

[34] Martens & Willems 2002, 333-338.

[35] Vilvorder 1995, 213-215, 254.

[36] Lipid analysis was performed by the department of Interphase Chemistry and Catalysis from the Catholic University of Leuven; see Kimpe, Martens & Jacobs 2002.

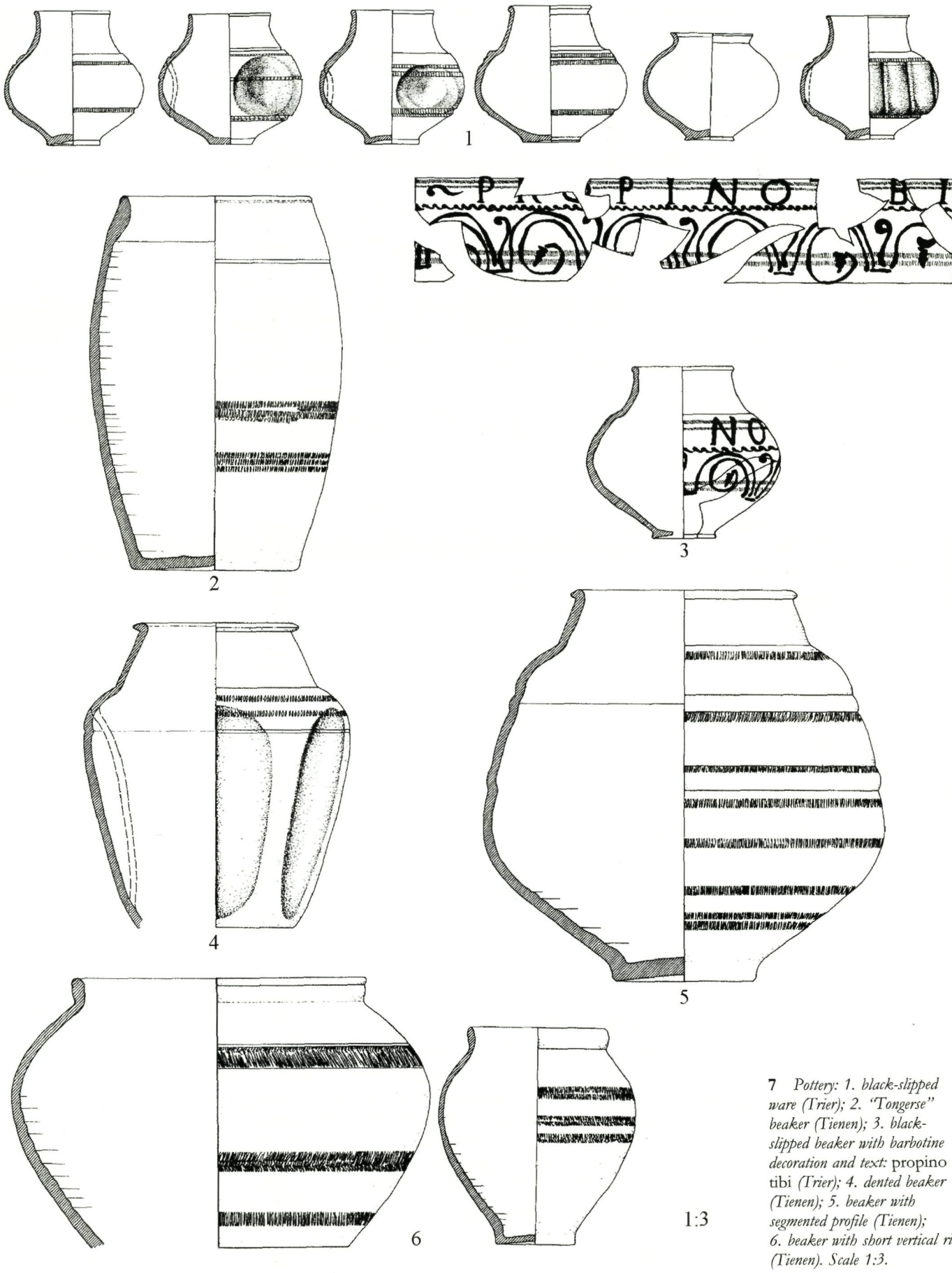
[37] *Ibid.*

[38] Misfires were found on the site Schelpheuvel, in the eastern perifery of the vicus; see Mertens 1972, 134-135, fig. 12.

[39] Thomas 1983, 129-132.

[40] Clauss 2000, 127; Huld-Zetsche 1986, 15.

[41] Bird 2001, 303-310; see also Bird in this volume.



7 *Pottery: 1. black-slipped ware (Trier); 2. "Tongerse" beaker (Tienen); 3. black-slipped beaker with barbotine decoration and text:* propino tibi *(Trier); 4. dented beaker (Tienen); 5. beaker with segmented profile (Tienen); 6. beaker with short vertical rim (Tienen). Scale 1:3.*

individual. We could distinguish two large groups with exactly the same fabric and colour. It seems that these groups coincide with series that come from the same production unit in the pottery workshop. Therefore we can conclude that these censers were purchased together at the same time while the vessels of the previous groups were individually different and produced at different moments. The censers also seemed new and only used once while the other vessels showed a wide variation of wear.

In the category of the drinking vessels we have 79 black slipped beakers (fig. 7: 1), mostly imported from Trier, although some of them are from the Argonne[42]. Most of the beakers are of the type Niederbieber 33, only three are of the type Niederbieber 29[43]. Three beakers were larger than the rest. One of them had decoration and inscription in barbotine (fig. 7: 3). It says "propino tibi", a latinised Greek expression that can been translated as "I drink to your health"[44]. These larger beakers can be interpreted as mixing vessels. Most of the beakers belong to the groups I-III of the typology of Künzl, which indicates a date from 255 to 280 AD[45], and Trier form 1 of Symonds[46]. These beakers offer the most secure dating criteria for the context of the pits.

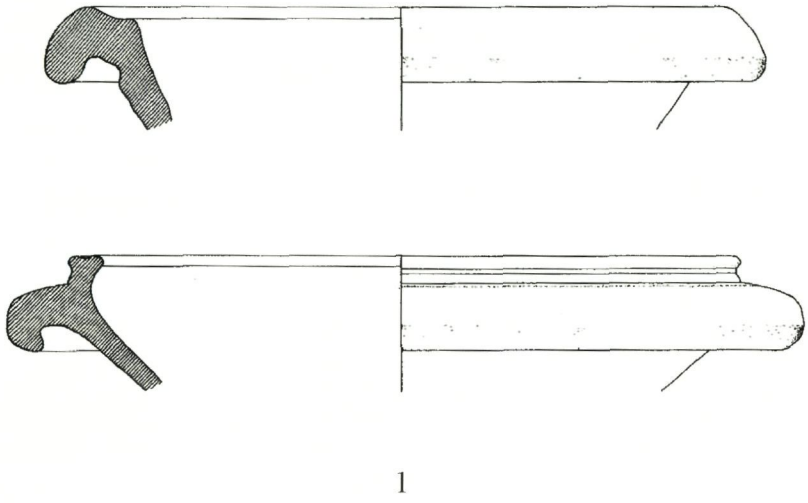
So far, we have mentioned the forms of ceramics with a Minimum Number of Individuals between 88 and 107. The other ceramics present include locally-produced beakers in fine smoked ware[47]. First, there were 18 of the so-called "Tongerse" beakers[48] (fig. 7: 2), 6 large beakers with a segmented profile (fig. 7: 5), 3 dented beakers of the type Niederbieber 32 (fig. 7: 4) and 14 beakers with a short vertical rim (fig. 7: 6). Most of these beakers are quite large, but imitate the shape of smaller drinking vessels. They are made in very fine, nicely decorated ware, presuming a function as tableware. It seems likely that they are wine mixing vessels, very large drinking beakers, or a combination of the two. The relatively low minimum number of individuals of 15 locally-produced jugs (fig. 8: 2) completes the category of the tableware. A Dressel 20 amphora (from southern Spain) and an amphora from the valley of the Meuse represent the category of transportation vessels. Huld-Zetsche argues that olive oil amphorae in *Mithraea* are present as containers for fuel for the oil lamps[49]. The oil could obviously also be used for cooking.

Appropriately, there were 12 oil lamps (fig. 8: 4) mostly in colour-coated ware imported from the Rhine area. There were also 9 mortaria, one from Bavay, one of the Meuse region, the other 9 locally-produced (fig. 8: 1) [50]. The 5 mortaria with the lion heads (fig. 8: 3) as well as some fragments of samian ware (fig. 8: 6) are imported from workshops in the Eastern Gaul or the Argonne area. One small crater in sigillata (fig. 8: 5) is from Rheinzabern. There were also fragments of a rim and a piece of a handle with a curved line decoration in barbotine[51]. A much bigger crater (fig. 9: 1) is a unique piece, also made at Rheinzabern. We have only two fragments from the handles and some fragments from the bottom. On one handle we have a lion and on the other a snake[52].

Another very exceptional find is a locally produced incomplete crater in lead-glazed ware (fig. 9: 3). On one side there is an applied medallion representing the bust of a figure with curls coming out underneath a Phrygian cap. This figure can most probably be identified with Mithras. Still in local lead-glazed ware, we have a lid that possibly fits on the crater (fig. 9: 4). Lead-glazed ware is rare in the western provinces in the third century AD and may be closely connected with eastern cults. Also from a local workshop is a lid with a clear ritual function (fig. 9: 2). It shows three figures: a snake with an applied lizard head, an incised crater and an applied lion's head with the face of a man. The edge of the rim of the lid was painted red. In the comb of the lizard head traces of black paint can be detected. The underside of the lid (fig. 9: 2) is affected by smoke, as were some of the incense burners[53]. On this side there is a graffito which remains unidentified.

Next is a very large cult vessel (fig. 10), of a type known to have been made in the valley of the Scheldt and found at Tournai and Aardenburg, and in the valley of the Dender at Blicquy[54]. Our vessel is locally-produced and has a very unique feature: a hollow tube starts on the inside of the bottom and goes upward. Near the rim, the tube goes to the exterior to create a curve and turn outward like a spout. On the outside of the vessel the tube is better finished than on the inside. Without doubt this hollow tube represents the snake that takes fluid from the bottom of the vessel to spit it out from its mouth. Residue-analysis showed that no fats have been preserved inside the fabric of the vessel[55]. This could mean that the vessel contained water or wine. In any case, it was a liquid that was heated, considering the burning marks on the bottom of the vessel. Experiments with an imitation vessel have shown that when

42 For identification of production centres thanks to F. Vilvorder, Centre de Recherches d'Archéologie Nationale, Université Catholique de Louvain.
43 For typology see Oelman 1976.
44 Thanks to Mrs. Magda Van Eepoel for the translation
45 Künzl 1999, 53-65.
46 Symonds 1992, 49-55.
47 See also Martens, Hanut *et al*, in press.
48 Vanvinckenroye 1991, type 525.
49 Huld-Zetsche 1986, 14-15.
50 For identification of production centres thanks to S. Willems, Institute for the Archaeological Heritage of Flanders.
51 Thomas 2002, 8-12.
52 See also Thomas in this volume.
53 For a comparison with the snake-lion-cantharos symbolism on censers, see Bird in this volume.
54 Of type C3, described by Amand 1983, 21-22.
55 Unpublished report: C. Smith & O. Craig 2001: *Residue analysis of Roman Mithraic ceramics and vessels associated with Roman funerary remains from Tienen Belgium*, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.



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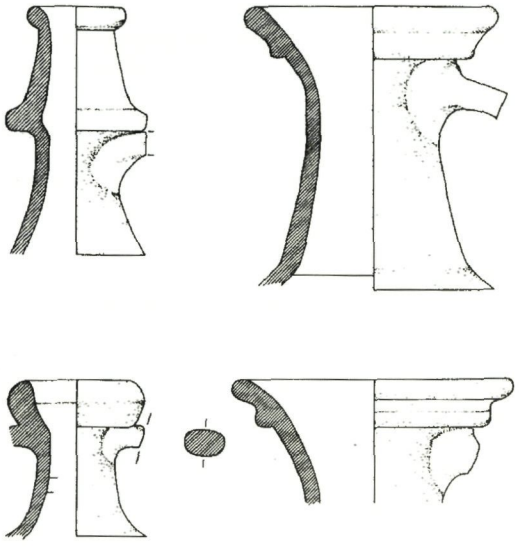

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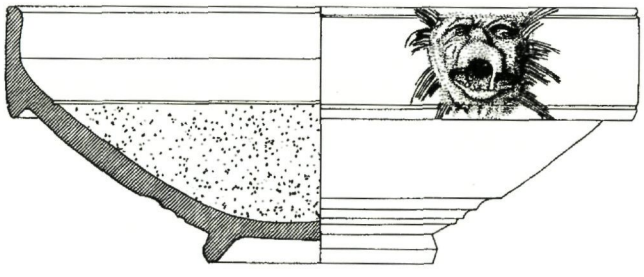

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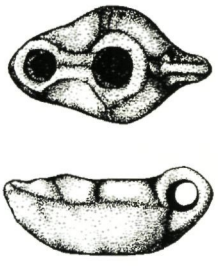

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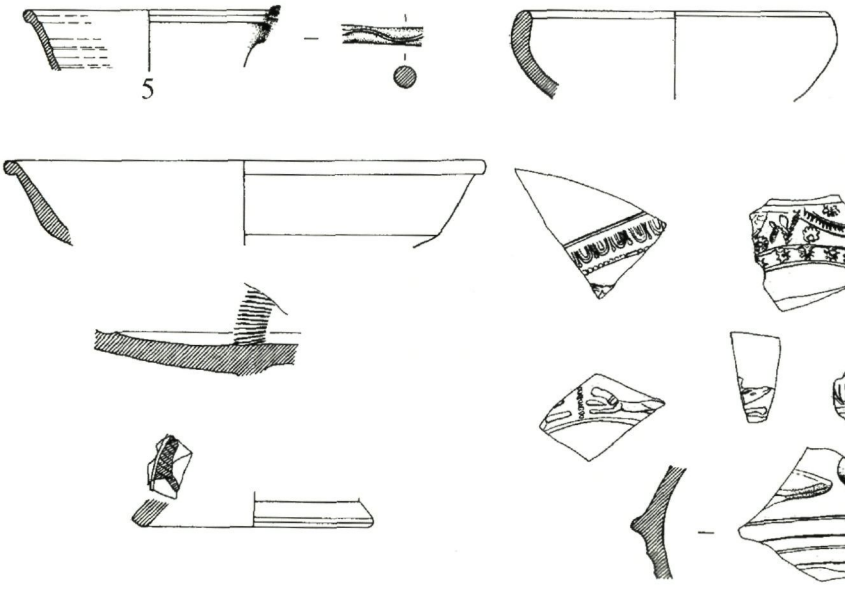
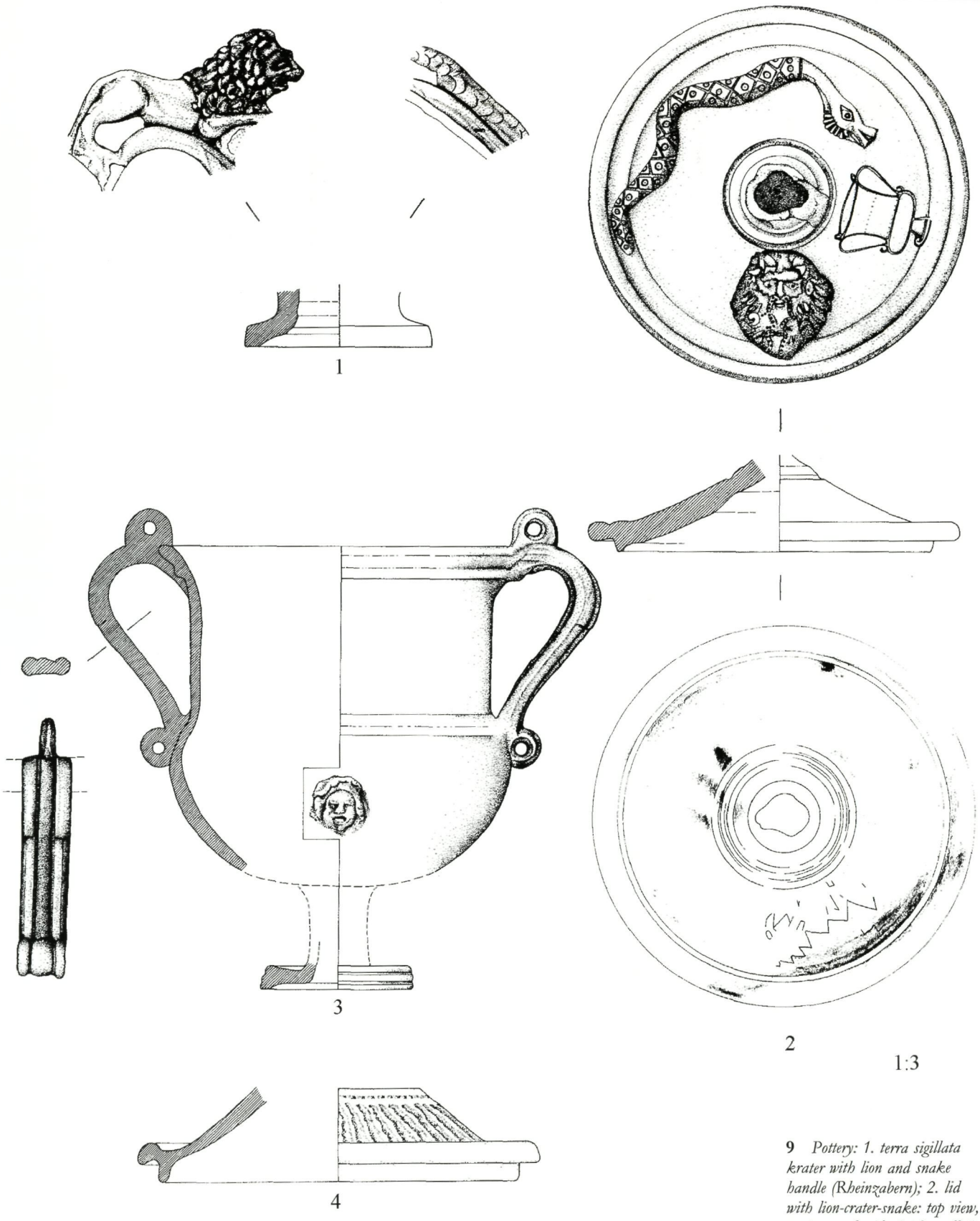


5

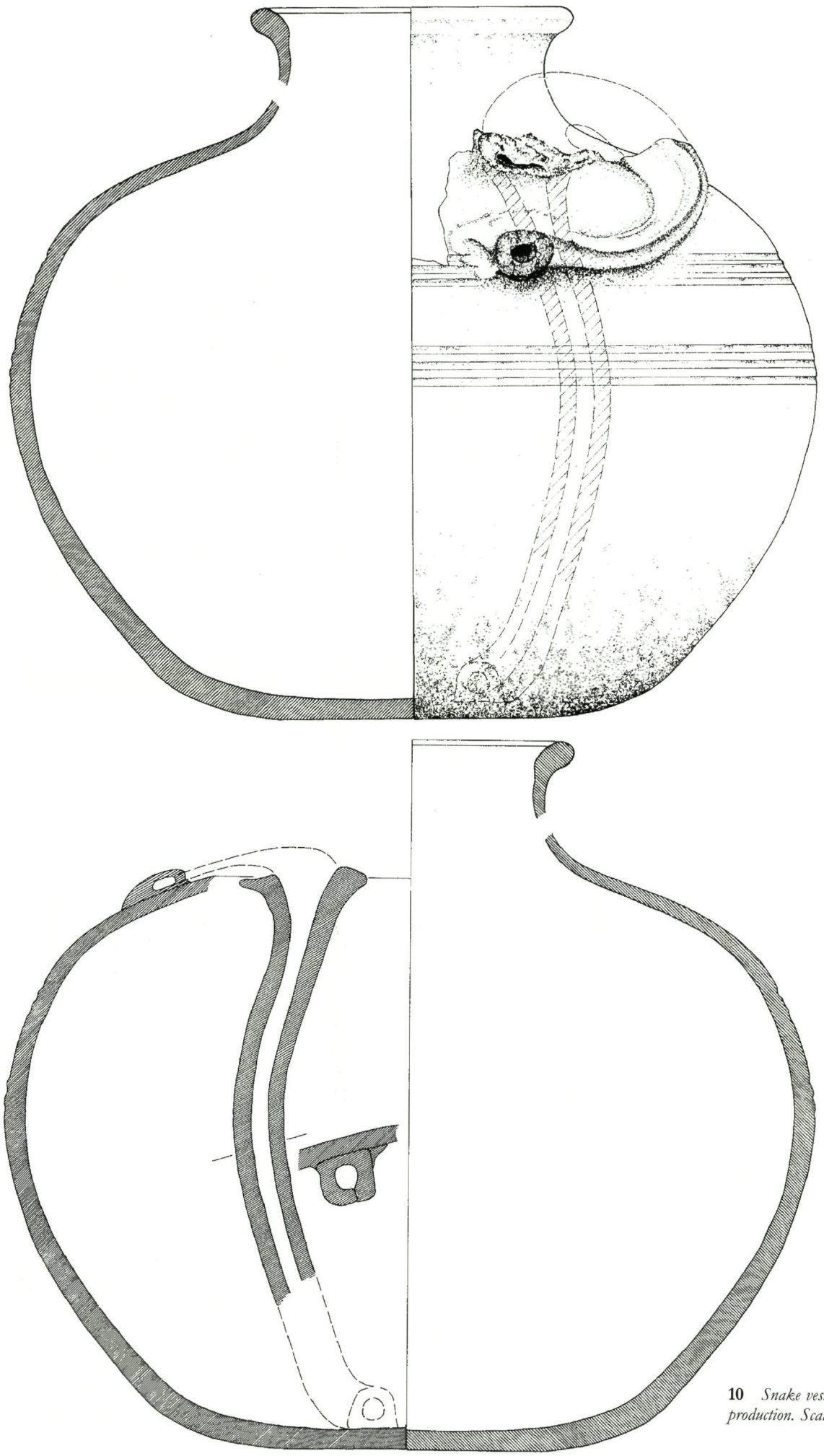
6

1:3

8 *Pottery: 1. mortaria (Tienen); 2. jugs (Tienen); 3. mortarium (Eastern-Gaul/Argonne); 4. oil lamps (Köln/Tienen); 5. krater (Rheinzabern); 6. Samian ware (South-Gaul/ Argonne).*



9 *Pottery: 1. terra sigillata krater with lion and snake handle (Rheinzabern); 2. lid with lion-crater-snake: top view, section, underside (with graffiti); 3. crater in lead glazed ware (Tienen); 4. lid in lead glaze ware (Tienen). Scale 1:3.*



10 *Snake vessel of Tienen production. Scale 1:3.*

properly closed with a lid, after the point of boiling is reached the liquid in the vessel is forced outwards under pressure through the tube or the mouth of the snake[56]. This vessel undoubtedly played an important role in certain ritual activities. This is the only snake vessel, of the hundreds that are known, where the snake has a real function and can spit out a fluid. There is also a locally-produced storage vessel which has an unusual decoration of a curved line on the rim.

Within this third century ceramic assemblage, there were also some residual first century ceramics.

Glass

The small amount of glass from the pits includes some shards of window glass, a square bottle (Isings 50), a beaker (Isings 85b), a ribbed bowl (Isings 3) and a round piece of black glass used in games[57]. The low number of glass objects in the Tienen *Mithraeum* and in most other *Mithraea* reflects the relative lack of importance of glass for the initiation rituals or the meals.

Iron

The iron objects are numerous. A large quantity of nails, some clamps and a hinge were found in the central aisle. The nails could be remains of the wooden floor or from the roof structure. The iron objects also indicate a slow decay and gradual collapse of the building. In the pits a large number of nails, a knife and some other yet unidentified objects (fig. 11: 2 and 3) were deposited. We also need to mention the fragment of the sword (fig. 11: 1) discovered in the consecration pit.

Lead

In lead, there are some strips of various thickness and width (fig. 11: 4). Their function has not yet been determined.

Copper alloy

The copper alloy objects are diverse. There is a small snake with a decoration of incised crosses on the body (fig. 12: 3): the head is missing. A small libation vessel takes the shape of the head of a Silenus (fig. 13). The object cannot be used because the vessel does not have a bottom. It was made not as a functional vessel but rather as a symbolic representation of a vessel[58]. A small very finely-decorated cup looks like a miniature incense burner (fig. 12: 5). It was broken of at the lower end. It seems as if the object was fixed to another object. A similar shape in ceramic has been found at Apulum[59]. There is also a copper alloy bell (fig. 12: 1): bells are frequently used in religious ceremonies and are also often found in *Mithraeum* contexts[60]. There is the decorated upper part of a key (fig. 12: 2), a thin round object that looks like a medallion, the needle of a brooch and some decorative nails.

Some small bronze strips with a sword-like shape, mostly broken, are very peculiar (fig. 14: 1-8). One of these strips has an incised VIII at the upper end (fig. 14: 6). A similar piece was found in a ritual pit with a Venus statue and many other things, excavated in 1982[61]. This strip had an incised VIIII. It is difficult to define the function of these objects. The upper part of the strip looks as if it was made to fit into another object. One possibility could be that these are the rays of the crown of Mithras-Sol. One example of a statue with holes in it to fit in rays of the sun was found at the sanctuary of Attis in Ostia[62]. If the strips from Tienen indeed had this function, the question remains why the rays were numbered. Could these numbers refer to certain keypoints of the sun's annual cycle?

On the pebbled road in front of the *Mithraeum* we found a small bronze plate with an inscription (fig. 12: 4). It says *DIM (deo invicto mithrae), Tullio Spuri, VSLM*: to the invincible god Mithras, Tullio (son or slave of) Spurius has gladly and willingly fulfilled his pledge[63]. The plate could have been attached to a wooden post or board in the *Mithraeum*.

Coins

The coins have been studied and commented on by Johan van Heesch[64].

4 coins were found in the central aisle of the *Mithraeum* and 10 in the sacrificial pits. From the central nave we have an as (1st/2nd century), a nummus from Constantine I (with "*soli invicto comiti*" from ca. 310-313), an Urbs Roma (ca. 340) and an imitation Urbs Roma (ca. 350). From the sacrificial pits we have an as from Augustus, an as from Tiberius, an as from Claudius (ca. 50), a dupondius from Vespasian (69/70), a dupondius from Hadrian (ca. 120) an as from Marcus Aurelius (ca. 150), a denarius from Iulia Domna (ca. 200), a denarius from Caracalla (ca. 212), a denarius from Iulia Mamaea (ca. 230) and a nummus of Constantius II (ca. 330-335). The first century coins probably go together with the ceramics from older features and can be interpreted as intrusive. The rest of the coins is difficult to interpret, although they seem to confirm the date of the beakers in colour coated ware from Trier from 255-280. The coins from the second century were probably still in circulation in the third century.

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56 Thanks to Mr. Gooris for conducting this experiment.

57 For the identification of the glass, thanks to P. Cosyns, Museum Het Toreke, Tienen.

58 For further examples of not unusable objects in ritual contexts, Fauduet 1998, XXX.

59 See Höpken in this volume.

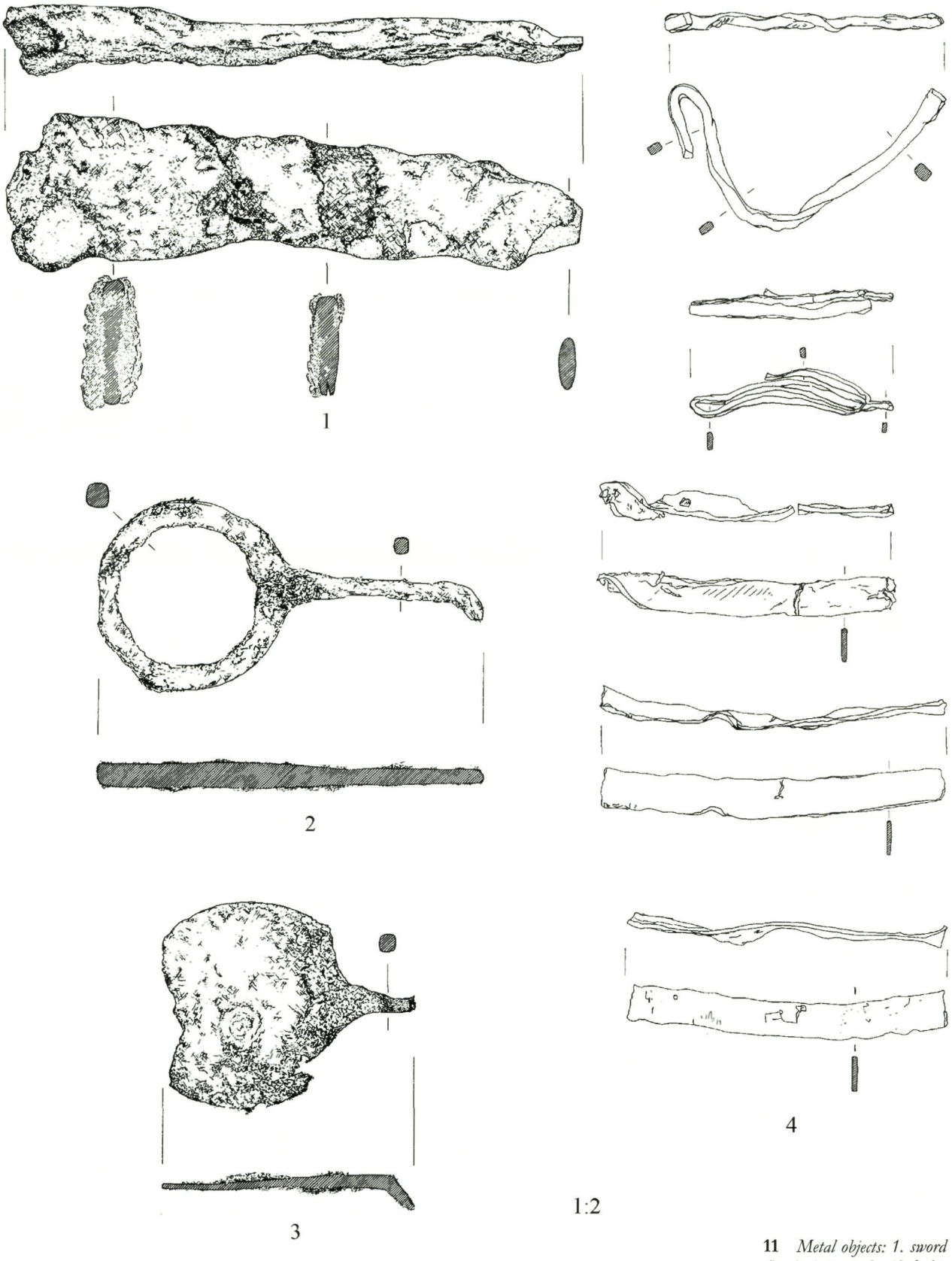
60 Bells are also represented in statues, for example see Huld-Zetsche 1986, Kat. 39.

61 Thomas 1983, 304.

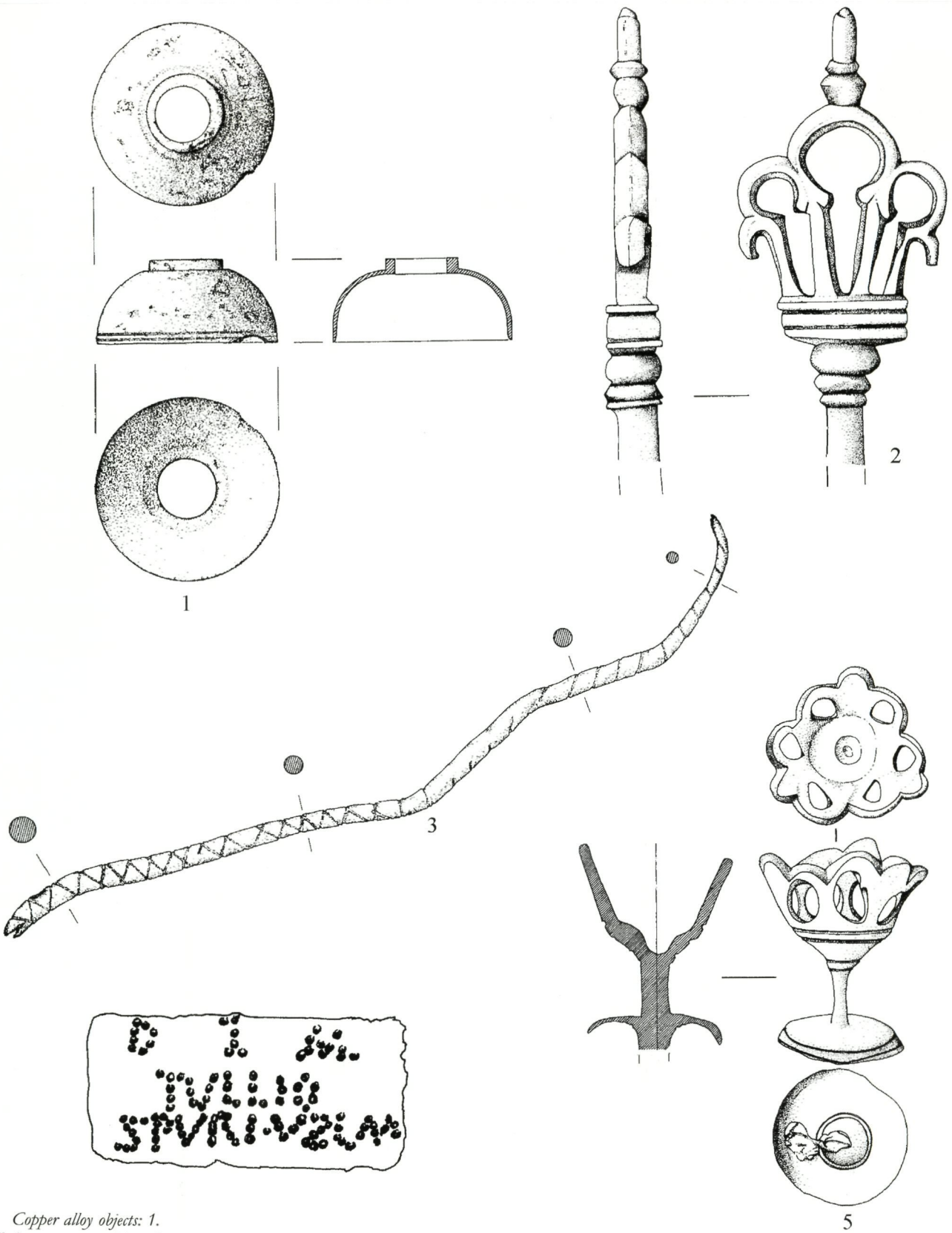
62 Pavia 1999, 94.

63 Deman & Raepsaet-Charlier 2002, 159 ter, Pl. LIV.

64 Dr. J. van Heesch, coin cabinet, Royal Library of Belgium, Keizerslaan 4, 1000 Brussels, Belgium.



11 *Metal objects: 1. sword (iron); 2-3. unidentified objects (iron); 4. strips (lead). Scale 1:3.*



12 *Copper alloy objects: 1. Bell; 2. upper part of key; 3. Snake; 4. votive plate; 5. unidentified object. Scale 1:3.*

13 *Head of Silenus.*

Three coins from the central aisle and one from the top layer of the pits are from the first half of the fourth century. They must have been left behind in the *mithraeum* that must have been a ruin. The two sunken areas of the row of pits and the almost completely filled up central aisle of the *mithraeum* could be visited as a place of sporadic worship. The discovery of coins that date later than the abandonment of certain *mithraea* is a well-known issue[65]. The fact that only coins were left behind and no other 4th century material like ceramics proofs that the coins did not accidentally end up in the *mithraeum* due to its possible later use as a rubbish dump.

Stone
There were various kinds of local limestone and tuff in the pits. Some of the stone blocks are burnt.

Wall plaster
Large amounts of wall plaster were collected from the pits. This has been discussed above under the topic of the structural remains. Most important is the presence of some lumps of pure lime, ready to make plaster or whitewash. This could indicate renovation works had been undertaken.

Animal remains
More than 14,000 animal bones have been collected. Lentacker, Ervynck and Van Neer will discuss the animal remains from this complex in detail in this volume. For the interpretation of this finds deposit I will briefly mention some important results of their research. The pits contained 242 chickens, 12 lambs, 8 piglets, a hare, a jackdaw, remains of beef, salted fish and fish sauce. All the domestic fowl were of the male sex: cockerels. Another interesting point is that the study of the teeth of lambs and piglets allowed determining the period of the year at which the event took place: apparently the animals were slaughtered around the end of June to the beginning of July. The summer solstice is clearly an important date in the Mithras cult. More speculatively, the eels could have been used as a representation of the snake and the jackdaw could symbolise the *corax* (raven). The horse skeleton at the bottom of the earlier pit is also difficult to interpret.

5 Interpretation

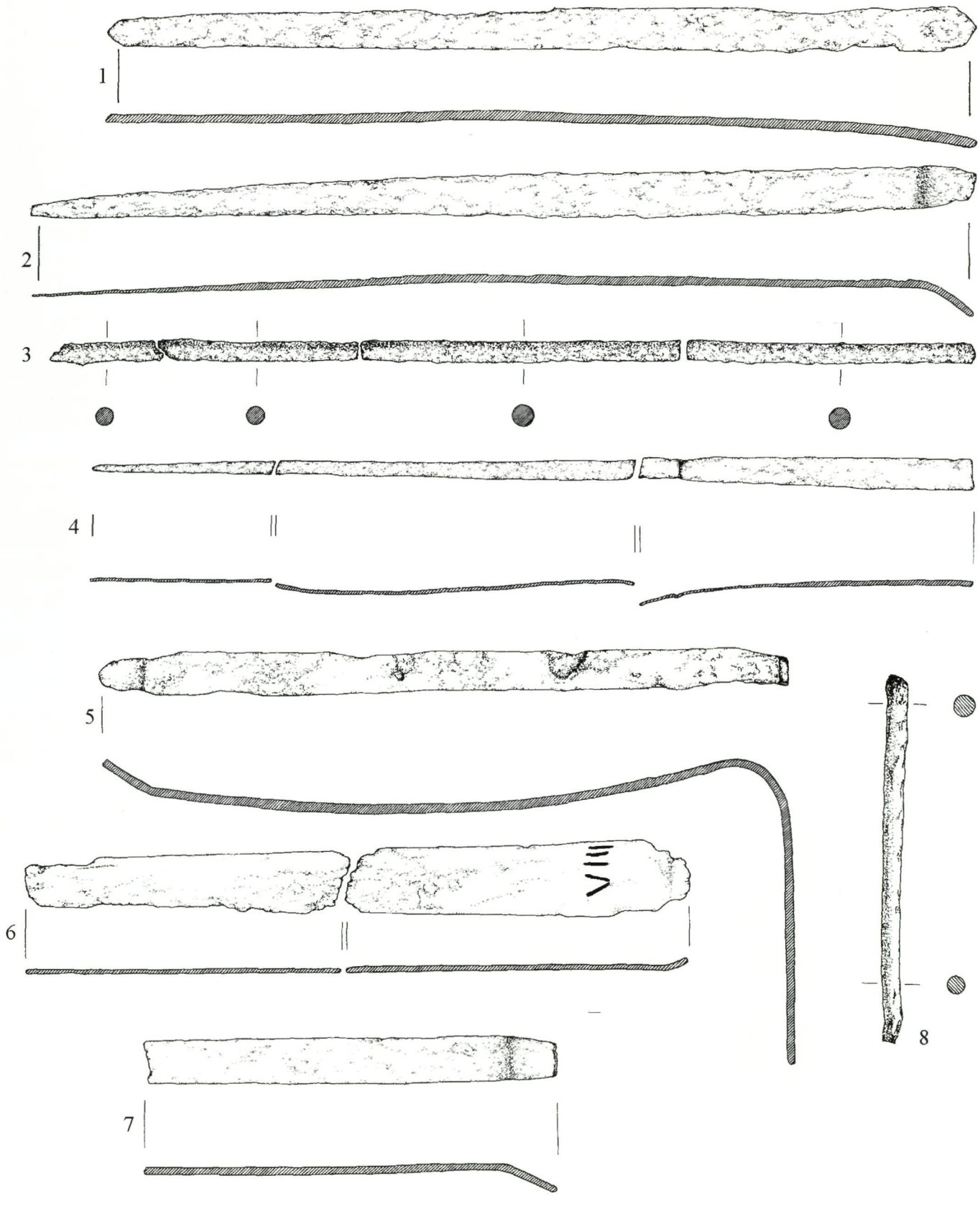
The one-event story

The taphonomical study of the context shows that the pits were filled up relatively quickly, in the course of a few days at most. The evidence for the one event interpretation is abundant. First of all the four pits were filled with a common layer, which proves at least the final closure of the pit happened in one go. The black layers on the bottom of the pit and in different levels of the other pits consist of almost pure charcoal and are full of finds. These layers represent very fresh and primary refuse[66]. For the analysis of the contexts we have been interrogating our database[67] (fig. 15). The sorting of the ceramics by individuals showed that many sherds from the different pits and layers could be joined together. In other words the individual vessels were formed with sherds from the different pits. Even sherds of vessels which later have been reconstructed into complete pots were found in different pits. This means the pits were filled up at the same time. We can also see that the number of individuals decreases towards a higher degree of completeness of the pots. With other words, most of the individuals had a completeness of less than 25%. In total we have 18 complete pots from the pit with the stepped entrance (feature 27) and 7 from feature 101 (the three interconnected pits). If we take a look again at the minimum numbers of individuals of the different forms in each ceramic group we can see some peaks of the most represented individuals. These are the plates, cooking pots, lids, beakers and incense burners. They have a minimum

[65] Sauer 1996, 21-24.

[66] For a good definition of primary refuse see Hill 1995, 43, fig. 14 and Schiffer 1987, 47.

[67] The aim of the database is to uncover the structure of deposits and if possible to make a classification in different types of layers of deposits, each defined by average sherd weight, the degree of completeness of vessel, the types of vessels, the minimum number of individuals, the occurrence of fragmented bone, articulated bone groups or complete carcasses and the presence or absence of different categories of small finds. The structure of the database was presented at the conference: Promoting Roman Finds: context and theory, July 6-7th 2002 in Durham (Martens in press).



14 *1-8: lead strips; 6. lead strip with incised VIII. Scale 1:1.*

number of individuals around 110. This number possibly reflects more or less the number of individuals present at the special occasion. It could be considered that the most personal item of a table service could be a beaker. However, a single beaker could also be passed around to be used by more than one person. The fact that the different functional ceramics have an equal number of individuals also indicates that the pit was probably filled in a very short time. The fact that most of the individuals of the plates, cooking pots, beakers, jugs, lids and incense burners were represented by less than 25% could even suggest a very organised deposition strategy. It seems as if care was taken that at least a part of the table service of every person present ended up in the pits. It is difficult to imagine how this worked in actual practice. It almost seems that every person himself deposited parts of his or her service in the pits. If we are dealing with normal deposition of waste it would be very coincidental that almost from every piece of tableware only one or two fragments ended up in the pit. We will come back to the significance of this behaviour below.

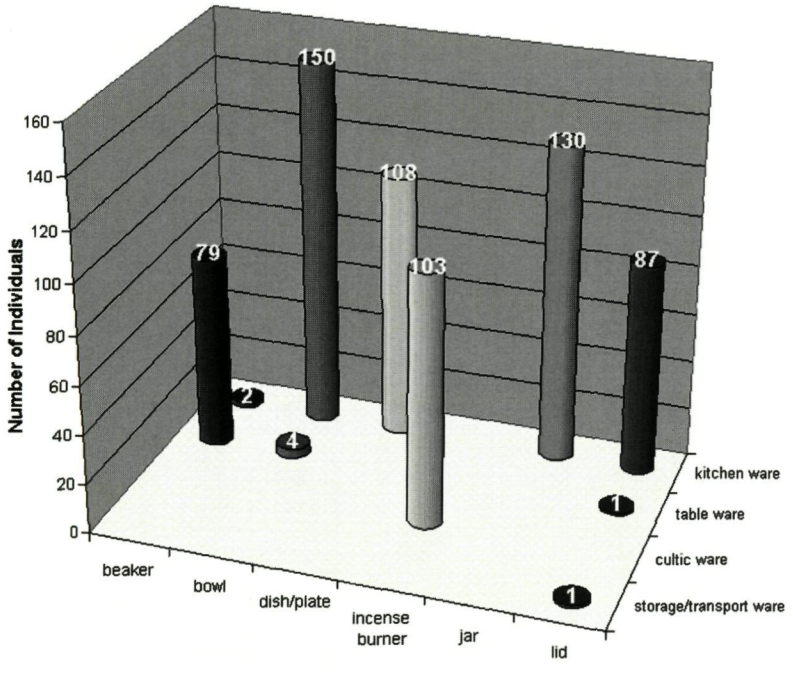
An alternative interpretation could be that the cult community decided to destroy all the table service they conserved somewhere in the temple at one moment. The study of the animal bone, however, shows very convincing arguments for one festivity. The intra-skeletal distribution of the bones of the cocks, the lambs and the piglets, as well as the very good preservation of the bones shows that we are dealing with a uniform and fresh waste deposit[68]. The practice of digging neighbouring pits with a common upper side and the subsequent filling up of these pits in a very short time have been already identified at other Roman sites like at Bliesbruck[69]. In the case of the pits next to the *Mithraeum* at Tienen we believe that they were dug to extract loam for the renovation of the temple. This theory is supported by the position of the pits next to the building and the presence of wall plaster and fresh lime in the pits. This shows that the old wall plaster was removed during renovation works. The presence of fresh lime in the pits suggests that new plaster was produced. If the pits were dug at the same time it would certainly seem plausible that they were filled up together, for example, after a big event that created much waste.

A ritual feast on the occasion of the summer solstice around AD 250-270?

The number of plates, colour coated beakers, jars and cooking pots provide clear evidence of a large meal organised for at least 100 people. The animal remains, 242 cockerels, 12 lambs and 8 piglets suggest there was meat available for many more people. The importance of the cult meal in the Mithraic liturgy has been clearly demonstrated[70]. The presence of more than 100 incense burners and the other objects with a very clear ritual function like the snake-vessel, the lid with three symbols and the craters are clear evidence for the ritual context of this meal. The very clear selection of male animals also reveals the symbolic significance of the feast. This brings us to the question of the organisation of the event, which must have been complicated. It involved the gathering of approximately 700 ceramic vessels, some locally-produced especially for the cult, some imported from elsewhere, along with more than 240 cocks, some lambs and pigs. The least we can say is that this must have been an important occasion. The jaws of the lambs and piglets indicate that these animals were slaughtered towards the end of June or the beginning of July. The hypothesis that our event could be organised at the time of the summer solstice becomes very attractive in view of the importance of the organisation. Epighraphical evidence from the province of Noricum has revealed a possible parallel to our event. The album of the Mithraists of Virunum mentions that they gathered on June 26 in 184, the day of the summer solstice, to commemorate their deceased colleagues[71]. Roger Beck has recently shown that the Mithraists commemorated mortality and immortality of the souls at the time of the summer and

[68] For more elaborate argumentation see Lentacker, Ervynck & Van Neer in this volume.
[69] Petit 1988, 207-208.
[70] Vermaseren 1974, 17-21.
[71] Piccotini 1996, 22.

15 *Most frequent vessel types.*



winter solstices[72]. The importance of the solstices has also been discussed based on the architectural lay out and the orientation of the *Mithraea* of Caesarea and Carrawburgh.

As mentioned before we have reasons to believe that the *Mithraeum* was renovated just before and probably for the occasion of the big event. It should be no surprise that timber framed buildings need occasional restoration. There is epigraphic evidence referring to restorations of *Mithraea* before important celebrations or after a period of neglect. In Germania Superior, the *Mithraeum* of Wiesbaden was renovated after a period of neglect and some hostilities[73]. An inscription from the vicus of Murrhardt also refers to a restoration of a *Mithraeum* from ground level up[74]. The album of the Mithraists of Virunum mentions that they had restored the temple before the gathering on 26 June in 184[75]. Inscriptions mention the restoration of a temple or temples of Mithras in Virunum in 183 and 239[76], and again in 311[77]. Also famous is the inscription mentioning the restoration of the *Mithraeum* in Carnuntum for the imperial conference in 308[78].

The theory of the renovation of the temple is significant in relation to the dating evidence for the date provided by the animal bone and the evidence of the number of people provided by the ceramics. Surely it must have been an important ritual feast at the day the souls become immortal. Then why do we not have similar evidence from all the *Mithraea* and only from the one at Tienen. The answer to this question could be that such gatherings were very exceptional and only happened on very rare occasions, for example exceptional astronomical events. Another possibility could be that occasionally some cult communities, perhaps even from different regions, celebrated this event together. Still another possibility could be that such gathering occurred more frequently, but the waste of the feasts did not end up on the property of the temple site. This theory will be elaborated on in the next part. One should keep in mind that it is not the events that produced a lot of waste that becomes visible in the archaeological record but it is the waste deposition strategy that is reflected.

Why throwing away the crockery of a meal for at least 100 people?

The fact that most of the deposited ceramics were used both for eating and drinking and for ritual purposes during the feast is not very surprising, although it is more difficult to explain why the pottery was deposited as it was. The practice of burying the remains of feasts is not uncommon in the north-west of the Roman Empire. This kind of deposits is found on temple sites as well as on urban, military and rural settlements[79]. In the Roman small town of Tienen we have several examples of pits filled with remains of meals, sometimes in combination with ritual objects like incense burners, valuable metal objects and statues[80]. Examples elsewhere are numerous. In the nearby capital of the Civitas Tungrorum (Tongeren) there are several examples of pits with remains of rich meals[81]. To mention only a few other examples we can mention Nijmegen[82] (Ulpia Noviomagus) and Bliesbruck[83] in Germania Inferior, Newstead[84] in Britannia[85] and the work of Fauduet[86] and Tuffreau-Libre[87] for Gallia. The pits from the *Mithraeum* in Tienen have a relatively high minimum number of individuals, but comparable numbers can be found at other sites[88]. It is therefore not exceptional to bury the remains of feasts. The question of why is much more difficult to answer. The ritual is not at all typical for the Mithras cult. Many *Mithraea* have small deposits under the altar, in the central nave, under the side benches[89] or even in niches built in the side benches[90]. However, some also have big pits with a high number of finds[91].

The deposits in *Mithraea* are often interpreted as consecration pits often containing a limited number of animal bone, consumed or not, and complete pots or fragments of pots and sometimes valuable objects. These deposits probably represent sacrifices to the gods, usually Mithras. They also express a will to record certain events or actions as a point of reference for the gods, the cult community and for the individuals. The deposition of objects would prolong the effect of the sacrificial action in the future. The act of burying things in the ground is a way to communicate with the gods

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72 Beck 1998.

73 Czysz 1994, 143-144; Schwertheim 1974 no 86 f. = CIL XIII 7571 a.

74 Schwertheim 1974, no. 156 = CILXIII 6530 = CIMRM II no. 1297

75 See no. 60

76 Piccottini 1994.

77 CIL III 4796 = CIMRM II no. 1431

78 CIL III 4413 = CIMRM II no. 1698.

79 Fulford 2002, 199-218.

80 Martens in press; Martens, Hanut *et al* in press; Martens, Debruyne *et al* in press.

81 Vanderhoeven, Vynckier *et al* 1994, 61-65; Vanderhoeven, Vynckier & Vynckier 1993, 180-181.

82 Van Enckevoort 2002.

83 Petit 1986, 207-209.

84 Clarke 2000, 24-25.

85 For an excellent compilation on ritual depositions in Britain see Fulford 2002.

86 Fauduet 1993, 111-113.

87 Tuffreau-Libre 194, 132.

88 Pit 25 in Bliesbruck contained amongst others 70 beakers in colour coated ware (see no 71) and the pit from the "vergobret" at Argenton sur Creuse contained 30 beakers: Allain 1981, 18, 31.

89 London: Sheperd 1998, 75; Carrawburgh: Richmond & Gillam 1951, 35; Mundelsheim: Planck 1989, 179, Abb. 130; Dieburg: Behn 1928, 3, Abb. 1; Krefeld-Gellep: Reichman 1997, 23; Martigny: Wiblé 1995, 8, fig. 15; Stockstadt: Schleiermacher 1928, 46-56; Mainz: see also Huld-Zetsch in this volume.

90 For example, Martigny (Wiblé 1995, 6-7) and Bordeaux (Gaidon-Bunuel 1991, 49-58).

91 Wiesloch: Hensen 1994, 36 and in this volume; Pons Aeni: Garbsch 1985, 360; Martigny: Wiblé 1995, 3, fig. 8 and in this volume; Orbe: Luginbühl & Monnier in this volume; Nida-Hedderheim I and III: Huld-Zetsche 1986, 16, 19-20.

and to express dedication. Under the small floor made of terracotta tiles at the end of the nave of the *Mithraeum* at Tienen, opposite from the entrance, a deposit containing a fragment of a sword, some sherds and some animal bone must have been buried to commemorate a certain event. In the same way, the large sacrificial pits next to the *Mithraeum* commemorate an important event attended by more than 100 people. It contains the remains of the meal, broken ritual objects and instruments, and wall plaster. The shape of the pit with a stepped entrance and the distribution of the finds (the minimum number of individuals and the degree of completeness) even provide arguments for a hypothesis of a sacrificial procession at the end of the event. Could it be so that as a closing ceremony of the event all the participants took care to throw their personal plate, beaker, jar and incense burner, or parts of them, in the pit together with some specific cult objects? If we want to attempt to answer this question more needs to be said about the pit with the stairs leading to the bottom.

More than 90% of the finds were deposited on the bottom of this pit. Evidence for the practice of processions in Roman Gaul is available[92]. In the Santa Prisca *Mithraeum*, a sacrificial procession is depicted with a row of members holding objects like a crater, a cock, a plate and so on[93]. Merkelbach has pointed out that this procession must have taken place outdoor, because it was too big to happen inside the *Mithraeum*[94]. Definitely public display was not a feature of the Mithras cult and these kinds of processions would not have happened unnoticed. Since this is one of the rituals on which the external sources are silent, it could be that outsiders never saw this. In our case the *Mithraeum* is situated within an enclosure so that such a procession could be possible without becoming a public event.

The organisation of the feast

Clauss asks pertinently how the cult meals were organised[95]. Did everyone have to contribute to the costs or were they taken care of by the well-off? Some remarks can be made about the organisation of this specific feast in Roman Tienen. It seems very likely that most of the participants brought their plates, cooking pots, lids and jars to the occasion. They are all of more or less the same type, but derived from different moments of production and all had different degrees of usage. That is why it was not difficult to sort them individually. For example, many of the jugs had a thick layer of lime crust that indicated long-term frequent domestic use prior to this event. Other recipients looked more new. It seems that the participants must have received very clear prescriptions of what to bring to this event. As we have argued above, the censers and the beakers in black-slipped ware form more uniform groups. Could it be that a centralised committee of the cult community ordered the more special ceramic categories, that not everyone had available at home? This is certainly true for the specific cult objects that had to be imported, like the craters from Rheinzabern. Special orders were also made to local potters for objects like the glazed crater, the lid and the snake vessel. It seems that these objects were all destined to be sacrificed. Some of them could be considered as votive offerings. The number of animals necessary for this event would have required a very well planned organisation. As will be shown in the animal bone study of the Tienen *Mithraeum* in this volume it was not possible to collect 243 cocks, mostly adult species, in an instant. This requires long term planning.

Who were the participants?

It seems unlikely that all 100 of the people assumed to be present were initiated or had a grade of initiation. Maybe these people were the so-called *cryfi*, a much-discussed term that probably refers to members of the cult community without an initiation grade. Research has shown that 90% of the votive inscriptions for Mithras don't mention the initiation grade of the dedicator, possibly because they were not initiated[96]. Perhaps on important occasions a larger group of adherents participated, that did not belong to the community of the initiates. Another possibility is that cult communities from other temples gathered at this event. The high number of local ceramics would indicate that we are dealing with local communities. Assuming that more or less 100 people took part of the event and estimating that the probable number of initiates per temple would not exceed 25, would mean that in the small town of Tienen or its immediate surroundings at least three more *Mithraea* or Mithraic communities should be present. Considering the density of the villae in the region this would not be impossible. Another possibility would be that the host provided for the crockery for the guests.

Lead-glazed ware in the cult of Mithras

The third century crater in lead glazed ware with an applied-moulded bust of Mithras and a lid in the same ware that probably belonged to it are unique objects. Even more surprising is the fact

92 Fauduet 1993, 133.
93 Vermaseren 1956-1960, 480.
94 Merkelbach 1984; although some of the *mithraea* are very long, see for example Huld-Zetsche (Mainz) in this volume.
95 Clauss 1992, 14-15.
96 Clauss 1992, 8.

that they were produced locally. Similar very peculiar vessels with a specific cult function have been found in *Mithraea* at Bornheim-Sechtem[97] (Germany), Zillis[98] (Switzerland) and Krefeld-Gellep[99]. In all cases the glazed ware has been produced regionally and especially for a specific cult use[100]. It is remarkable that after the well-known production centres stopped producing glazed ware at the end of the first century and the beginning of the second, the ware is produced again locally on small scale for a very specific use, mostly in eastern cults. It seems an influence from Pannonia can be detected here. The Mithras cult was very popular in Pannonia from the middle of the second century onwards[101]. It is possible that the use of glazed ware in the Mithras cult and other eastern religions was imported from the Danube provinces, probably via the presence of the army to Nijmegen[102], Cologne[103] and to smaller centres of production. In my opinion, this is another argument for an influence from the Danube area to the north and the west[104]. Without doubt there is a cross-fertilisation of influences from different regions in the Roman Empire.

The significance of the lion-crater-snake iconography

The lion, the crater and the snake[105] are very well represented in this finds assemblage. First we have the crater in samian ware from Rheinzabern with a snake on one handle and a lion on the other. Then we have the lid with the crater flanked by a lion and a snake. Further, we have the vessel with the functional snake. Finally, we have a small snake in bronze. The fact that the lid and the snake vessel were produced locally makes further research on the deeper meaning of this iconographical group necessary. The crater with the snake bending over the rim on one side and the lion on the other side is also present on many tauroctony scenes. As most of the scholars of today believe, the tauroctony scene represents a celestial chart with several star constellations[106]. It is mentioned by Porphyry that Mithras guides the souls descending through the celestial gate of the Cancer constellation into the underground world[107]. The significance of the lion-crater-snake group has been discussed on several occasions before[108]. It is very difficult to identify the precise origin and genesis of this group considering the eclectic and ingenious iconography of the Mithras cult. The repetitive occurrence of this group in the Mithraic iconography and even on locally produced pottery reinforces the impression that it must have had a deep significance for the adherents. Zelljko Miletic[109] has developed a very interesting theory on the symbols of this group. He claims that the crater group at the bottom of the tauroctony scenes refers to the moment at which immortal souls incorporate. The crater is the cosmic container of souls, the symbol of the human body filled with soul and the liturgical vessel used in *Mithraea* as a representation of the cosmic crater. The soul is symbolised by the snake. And the lion could represent the winged god Aion often represented with a lion's face, who accompanies the souls through the celestial gates to become immortal. Thus we could conclude that the soul represented by the snake at the moment of death returns to the cosmic container of souls, the crater from which it is then accompanied by the lion to the celestial gate of Cancer to become immortal.

If there is an element of truth in this hypothesis we could perhaps interpret our mysterious snake vessel in a similar way. In Greek and Roman philosophy souls are connected with water. The liquid in the vessel would, after the point of boiling is reached, be conducted from the bottom of the vessel through the body of the snake to be discharged out of the crater. Could this symbolise the moment in which the soul leaves the crater to become immortal? Is it possible that the craters with the lion-snake symbolism, functioning as censers, also express this idea. Could the smoke leaving the crater to ascend towards the cosmos symbolise the passage of the souls? Does the lion present on the handle represent the guide of the soul? It has already been shown that the initiates with the grade of the lion were responsible for the burning of the incense[110]. Was the connection of water with souls the reason why they could not touch water?

The only certain aspect is that the adherents of the Mithras cult in Tienen ordered the fabrication of these special objects to perform rituals related to events in their myths. This shows that the development of the ritual–myth relation was a conscious and pervasive process, even as far afield as the countryside in the north of the province of Germania Inferior.

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97 See Ulbert in this volume.
98 Liver & Rageth 2001, 111-126.
99 Reichmann 1997, 21-24.
100 Martens & Vilvorder in press.
101 Clauss 1992, 255.
102 The fabrication of glazed ware in Nijmegen is proven by the presence of production waste. Thanks to Jan Thijssen for the information.
103 Höpken in press.
104 Schwertheim 1974, 274-275, 280,287 defends an influence from the Danube to the Rhine area; Clauss 1992, 124bargues there is no proof for this.
105 Also discussed by Bird in this volume.
106 Beck 1976, 95-98; Ulansey 1989.
107 Porphyry, *De antro nympharum*, 24.
108 See Bird in this volume; Bird 2001; Huld-Zetsche in this volume; Gordon 1998, 248-258.
109 Miletic presented a paper at the conference but unfortunately was not able to present his article for publication.
110 Bird 2001, 303-310.

Was the potter a Mithras adherent?

Some of the locally produced vessels were made specifically for the Mithras cult. The lid with crater-snake-lion, the crater and lid in glazed ware and the large vessel with the functional snake-tube are examples of vessels designed specifically to be used in the Mithras cult. A member of the cult ordered them. It seems however that the maker(s) of these vessels were initiated or understood the secrets of the cult very well. The same conclusion has already been drawn several times for vessels in connection with this cult[111]. Furthermore, we can say that a high degree of sophistication and understanding of the cult is included in the design of this pottery. The fact that specific and sometimes complicated vessels with a unique Mithraic iconography were produced in the vicus of Tienen itself is proof of the intensive understanding of the symbolism of this cult. It proves again how much Mithras was accepted and integrated into the Gallic pantheon[112]. The originality of the design, especially of the snake vessel, also shows that there was room for local interpretation of certain rituals. The followers of the cult had a certain freedom in making choices because there was no supra-regional organisation of the cult and the area of distribution "from the Rhine to the Nile" was very large[113]. The result is a large degree of local and regional specialities and influences next to the main teaching with standard elements that all cult places and practices have in common.

The Mithraeum at Tienen: filling a gap on the distribution map

The *Mithraeum* of Tienen fills in a gap in an empty zone of *Mithraea* in Germania Inferior. It is the first *Mithraeum* discovered in the Benelux region. In Germania Inferior the only known *Mithraea* are situated in Cologne, Dormagen and Krefeld-Gellep[114]. This gap may be due to the fact that the *Mithraea* in this zone were often built in perishable material, vulnerable to erosion, and are therefore hard to recognise. The fact that there may have been fewer excavations in this zone may also play a role. That the cult was more present in the Civitas Tungrorum than might have been suspected until now is confirmed by finds like the bronzes from Angleur[115], the recently found Mithraic medallion of Liberchies[116] and the votive inscriptions of Juslenville[117]. Finds like snake vessels typical though not exclusive for the Mithras cult found throughout the province may point in the same direction, although ceramic vessels by themselves are generally insufficient proof to identify this cult.

6 Summary

The *Mithraeum* of Tienen was built in the first half of the third century in the south-western periphery of the town. The building was erected with a timber frame on a plot of land bordered by a palisade next to a road. The pebbled road came from the centre of the town. Past the *Mithraeum* the road made a 90° turn towards the southern periphery of the town. The area around the *Mithraeum* had been in use for various craft activities since the second century. In the same area ritual deposits were occasionally buried. The zone was situated near the vast south-western cemetery that expanded towards the town in this period.

In the middle of the third century the town was flourishing due to pottery production[118]. In this period most of the other production centres were inactive and as a result the Tienen production was distributed over a wide area. This commerce naturally enhanced all sorts of contacts and influences in the region. Therefore we cannot be surprised that the Mithras cult that reached the summit of its popularity in this period[119] found its breeding ground in the small town of Tienen. That some of the inhabitants were spiritually ready to integrate this mystery cult into their lives is shown clearly by the finds of the *Mithraeum* complex. In the pits next to the *Mithraeum* the remains of an important ceremonial celebration were deposited. In these pits we found the remnants of a meal for at least hundred people: cooking pots, jars, plates, beakers and animal bones. Locally produced and imported ceramic vessels with specific cult significance were also deposited in the pits. The crater, lion and snake were especially important symbols represented on these finds. One vessel contained a tube in the shape of a snake that started on the bottom and turned outwards through the wall of the vessel. The vessel was clearly heated and experiments have shown that the snake spits out the liquid after the boiling point is reached. This event could symbolise the moment that the soul becomes immortal. From the remains of the lambs and piglets in the pit, the time of slaughter could be estimated: the animals were killed around the end of June. This date coincides very well with one of the two most important feasts in the Mithras cult: the summer solstice. The most precisely datable finds are the beakers in black slipped ware from Trier which can be dated to the period between 250 and 270 AD. Just before this cult meal took place, the

111 Vermaseren 1985, 170-173; Garbsch 1985, 398; Pétry 1978, 354; Demarolle 1986, 529; Schwinden 1987, 279-289.
112 Clauss 1992, 94.
113 Clauss 1992, 8.
114 Clauss 1992, 96-101.
115 Faider-Feytmans 1974.
116 Van Heesch 2001, 9-13.
117 Deman & Raepsaet-Charlier 2002, no. 45-46.
118 Clauss 1992, 12-13.
119 Clauss 1992, 255-258.

temple was renovated. This can be deduced from the presence of a quantity of old wall plaster in the pits along with the remains of the feast. Over 240 cocks were found in the same pits. Although the cock also occurs in contexts of other deities, the bird seems especially appropriate to be consumed (and sacrificed?) in honour of Mithras. Inside the *Mithraeum* a small consecration pit was present on the opposite end of the entrance at the place of the bull-killing scene. The pit was covered with several square hypocaust and roof tiles. In the pit a fragment of a sword was buried together with some sherds. These objects were buried in that specific place to commemorate an important event like the inauguration of the *Mithraeum*, the renovation of the temple or an important initiation ceremony.

The contribution of this *Mithraeum* to the study of the Mithras cult can be expressed on different levels. The *Mithraeum* fills in an empty zone on the distribution map of the cult in the region of the Civitas Tungrorum. It also shows the importance of careful excavation and detailed examination of the finds from ritual contexts. One of the aims of archaeology is to understand and reconstruct Roman society and one of the aspects of that research must be to explain how these finds became part of a context. This would undoubtedly lead us to a greater insight into lifestyle and culture in Roman times.

SAMENVATTING

Het *mithraeum* van Tienen werd omstreeks het midden van de 3de eeuw gebouwd langs een kiezelweg in de zuidelijke periferie van de *vicus* van Tienen. Het gebouw was opgetrokken in vakwerk en werd gedeeltelijk in de grond uitgegraven. Binnenin was de tempel versierd met muurschilderingen. Centraal in de middengang troffen we een kistje aan, gemaakt van dakpannen en gevuld met houtskool. Aan het uiteinde van deze middengang bevond zich een vloertje, waarop waarschijnlijk een altaar heeft gestaan. Het perceel van het *mithraeum* is afgebakend met een palissade. Binnen deze palissade, langs de noordwestelijke buitenmuur bevond zich een reeks van drie kuilen met een gemeenschappelijke afdeklaag. Eén van deze kuilen had een trapvormige toegang, uitgegraven in de leem. In deze kuilen werd, naast glas en metaal, een grote hoeveelheid aardewerk en dierenbeen aangetroffen. Het aardewerk bevat, naast de gewone vormen, ook specifiek cultusaardewerk. Het dierenbeenassemblage is uitzonderlijk. Het bestaat uit een massa kippenbeenderen, uitsluitend van het mannelijk geslacht. Uit de kaaksbeenderen van de lammeren en de biggetjes kon men de tijd van het jaar waarop de dieren werden geslacht bepalen. Hierdoor konden we besluiten dat de kuilen naast het *mithraeum* werden gebruikt voor de rituele depositie van de resten van een feestmaaltijd en andere offers.

APPENDIX

Palaeobotanical research

1 Seeds and fruits from the Mithraeum at Tienen

by Brigitte Cooremans[120]

1.1 Introduction

By means of the study of subfossil plant remains palaeobotanical investigation in general can provide insight in vegetation, food supply, agriculture, etc. in former times. The aim of this study in particular was to find out if any signs of the exquisite banquet held in honour of Mithras, clearly demonstrated by the study of ceramics[121] and animal remains, could be detected in the botanical waste as well. Often seeds and fruits are not preserved in archaeological context and disappear by decaying. However, sometimes they can survive. This is the case in favourable circumstances like burial in waterlogged, anaerobic conditions where they are not likely to be attacked by fungi or bacteria due to the lack of oxygen. However, in the loamy soil of Tienen, above groundwater level, this was clearly not the case. Another possibility of preservation is mineralisation, which occurs when organic tissues are replaced by calcium and phosphorous salts. Although the pit contained plenty of animal bones and thus calcium, hardly any mineralised plant remains were found. A third way of conservation is charring: except for one, all the seeds and fruits met with here were carbonised.

Samples for this study of fruits and seeds were retrieved from the same large pit close to the temple building, which has also been studied in detail on animal remains[122]. The soil samples where washed through three sieves with meshes of 5, 2.5 and 0.5 mm respectively. Thereupon the plant remains, in this case charred seeds and fruits, where picked out and identified under a binocular stereomicroscope with magnifications from 10 to 63 x. On the basis of the ceramics, the filling of this pit has to be situated in the second half of the 3rd century AD.

1.2 Results

The results of the analyses of the seeds and fruits are listed in Table 1. For the latin names the *Flora of Belgium*[123] has been consulted. The six samples examined all showed a rather low concentration of seeds. The general composition is very similar to that of other samples from Tienen[124] and those collected at excavations at Tongeren[125], the capital of the Civitas Tungrorum some 40 km east of Tienen situated in the same loesszone. Some remnants of cereals, barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) but mainly spelt (*Triticum spelta*) and perhaps some emmer wheat (*Triticum spelta/dicoccum*) as well, could be recognised. Most of these fragments consisted of chaff. As further food stuffs two lentils (*Lens culinaris*), some fragments of hazelnut shells (*Corylus avellana*) and some elder (*Sambucus* sp.) were found. Circumstances taken into account, these will most probably belong to the residual material[126], and should therefore not be seen as leftovers from this feast. However, noteworthy is the presence of some tiny carbonised fragments of processed food. At first sight they were identified as bread, but the possibility that they represent fragments of some kind of pulp of fruit, broth or porridge can not be excluded. Unfortunately most of the fragments recovered from our samples were far too small for further investigation under the Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) so that it is impossible to find out what kind of food they exactly represent. In any case, they seem to form the only proof of consumption refuse we could detect in these samples. Apart from the consumable plants, some seeds of wild species, belonging to the field weeds, grassland species and ruderal plants were present as well.

In general it can be assumed that this assemblage represents so-called settlement noise i.e. dispersed material being not the result of a single event but of many repeated or widely different actions. This means that the botanical remains belong to the residual component of the material present in this waste pit, and it does not seem appropriate to discuss this settlement noise in this text. So, in contrast to most of the animal remains which are believed to represent a single deposition, no botanical debris from the ritual feast has been preserved. Indeed, in these conditions[127], waterlogged plant remains of human consumption will hardly have had any chance to survive. Remains of, often exotic, food stuffs which are regularly found in ritual context, are usually charred, as in those cases they represent the remainder of burned offerings to the respective gods. Some examples are the exotic offerings to Fortuna at Nijmegen[128],

[120] Institute for the Archaeological Heritage of the Flemish Community (IAP), Koning Albert II-laan 19, 1st floor, B-1210 Brussels, Belgium.

[121] Martens, this volume.

[122] Lentacker *et al.*, this volume.

[123] Lambinon *et al.* 1998.

[124] Unpublished data, analyses in progress.

[125] e.g. Cooremans & Vanderhoeven 1992, Cooremans 1995/1996.

[126] See below.

[127] Cf. introduction.

[128] Hänninen & Vermeeren 1997.

to Isis at Mainz[129] and to Mithras at London[130], to name only a few. Pine cones and scales, dates and figs amongst others occur at a regular basis at these sacrificial sites in the Roman Empire. Pine cones were also burnt as scent on an altar during religious ceremonies inside a temple. The chance of recovering the remains of a pine cone used in this way in a waste pit full of human consumption refuse, again is rather small.

1.3 Conclusion

Unlike the results of the study of ceramics and animal remains, the investigation of seeds and fruits revealed nothing about this exceptional feast. As the plant remains will have been in a waterlogged condition, it is not at all surprising that they were not preserved under these poor conditions in loess above groundwater level. In comparison to other sacred places which were botanically analysed, none of the often spectacular plant remains, such as pine cones, dates and complete figs, were met with. This can be explained by the fact that in this case leftovers of human consumption were recovered, and no remains of ceremonies and rites carried out in temples, which involved the burning of often exotic plant food as offerings to the gods.

[129] Zach 2002.
[130] Grimes 1968.

Table 1
List of species found, charred unless otherwise stated (fr = fragment, x = some; xx = tens, * = mineralised, ° = waterlogged).

Number	120	134	135	136	176	177	
Useful plants							
CEREALS							
Hordeum vulgare	1	-	-	-	-	-	barley
Triticum spelta lemma fr.	1	-	15	-	-	-	spelt chaff
Triticum spelta/dicoccum lemma fr	-	1	11	-	-	2	spelt or emmer chaff
Triticum sp.	-	-	2	-	2	1	wheat s.l.
Triticum sp. lemma fragm.	6	6	xx	3	-	8	wheat chaff
Cerealia fragmenten	-	20	xx	x	1	x	cereals
PULSES							
cf. *Lens culinaris*	1	-	-	-	1	-	lentil
FRUIT AND NUTS							
Corylus avellana	-	-	6 fr	1 fr	-	1 fr	hazel
Prunus sp.	1 fr	-	-	-	-	-	sloe/plum/cherry/etc.
Sambucus ebulus	-	-	1	-	-	-	danewort
Sambucus sp.	-	-	2 fr	-	-	-	elder, etc.
Wild plants							
Bromus cf. *racemosus*	-	1	-	-	-	-	smooth brome
Bromus secalinus type	-	1	-	-	-	-	rye-brome
Digitaria ischaemum	-	-	1	-	-	-	red millet
Eleocharis palustris	-	-	8	-	-	-	common spike-rush
Fumaria officinalis	-	2 fr	1	-	-	-	common fumitory
Galium aparine	1 fr	2 fr	1; 3 fr	-	-	1 fr	goosegrass
Galium palustre	-	1 fr	1	-	-	-	lesser marsh bedstraw
Glyceria sp.	-	-	1	-	-	-	sweet grasses
Matricaria maritima cf.ssp. *inodora*	-	-	1 fr	-	-	-	sea mayweed
Melilotus sp.	-	-	2	-	-	-	melilots
Mercurialis annua	-	2	-	-	-	-	annual mercury
Odontites/Euphrasia	1 fr	-	-	-	-	-	bartsias/eyebrights
Plantago lanceolata	-	-	1	-	-	-	ribwort plantain
Poa annua/Phleum sp.	-	-	2	-	-	-	annual meadow-grass/cat's tails
Poa sp.	1	1	1	-	-	1	meadow grasses
Poaceae	1 fr	6 fr	30 fr	-	-	4 fr	grass family
Polygonum aviculare	-	-	-	-	-	1 fr	knotgrass
Polygonum cf. *convolvulus*	-	1	-	-	-	-	black bindweed
Polygonum hydropiper	-	1 fr	1	-	-	-	water-pepper
Polygonum lapathifolium	1	1	-	-	-	1 fr	pale persicaria
Raphanus raphanistrum peulfr.	-	-	3 fr	-	-	-	wild radish
Rumex acetosella	1	-	3; 1*	-	-	-	sheep' sorrel
Stellaria graminea	-	-	1	-	-	-	lesser stitchwort
Trifolium sp.	1	2	35	-	-	-	clovers
Vicia hirsuta/tetrasperma	2 fr	5 fr	20	-	-	-	hairy/smooth tare
Anthemis sp.	-	-	1 fr	-	-	-	
cf. *Apium*	-	-	1	-	-	-	
Bromus sp.	2 fr	1 fr	20 fr	-	-	1 fr	
Carex seroina type	2	-	-	-	-	-	
Carex sp.	2 fr	-	1	-	-	-	sedge
Centaurea sp.	-	-	1 fr	-	-	-	knapweeds, etc.
Chenopodium sp.	-	-	1	-	-	-	goosefoots
Polygonum sp.	-	-	6 fr	-	-	-	knotweeds, etc.
Ranunculus sp.	-	-	1	-	-	-	buttercups, etc.
Rumex sp.	1	-	32; fr	-	-	-	docks
INDETERMINATA	-	-	1	-	-	1	unknown
Processed food	+	-	-	-	+	-	

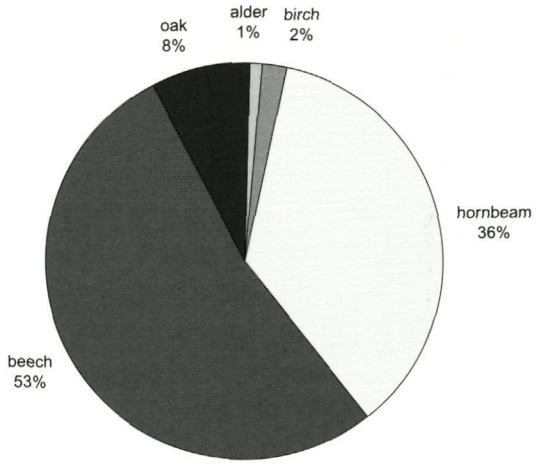
2 *Charcoal analysis from the Mithraeum at Tienen (Belgium)*

by Koen Deforce[131]

Several samples from the filling of the pits next to the south-western wall of the *mithraeum* have been analysed on their charcoal content. This in order to get information about the wood species that were used as fuel within the context of the Mithras temple and to verify if wood selection was influenced by ritual rather than functional aspects. These pits are considered to be filled at the same time and with the same kind of material, presumably the remains of a large feast. Therefore the charcoal fragments were treated as one assemblage just as for the ceramics and animal remains[132].
The analysed charcoal fragments were recovered by wet sieving on 2 mm meshes (find 176) or collected by hand during the excavation (all other samples). All fragments recovered were identified, except for some very small fragments (smaller than one growth ring) and a fragment of bark. For identification, each fragment was broken manually and the anatomical characters were observed in transverse, tangential and radial planes, with a reflected light microscope, with dark field optics and magnifications between 50 and 500 x. Identification was based on wood anatomical atlases[133] and a reference collection of artificially charred wood specimens

On a total of 264 identified charcoal fragments, only 5 different species were found. Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), oak (*Quercus* sp.), birch (*Betula* sp.) and alder (*Alnus* sp.). Beech (53%) and hornbeam (36%) strongly dominate the charcoal assemblage. Oak (8%), birch (2%) and alder (1%) are of little importance.

Alder is a tree typical for wet environments. Beech, hornbeam and oak prefer dryer conditions and birch grows on wet as well as dry but poor and acid soils. As both habitats occur not far away from the site, all of the five identified species might have grown nearby. However, this charcoal assemblage does not reflect the local woodland composition. From palynological research[134] it is known that this region already knew a fairly strong deforestation during Roman times. But the same palynological research shows that the diversity of the woodland vegetation must have been higher than reflected by the results of the charcoal analysis. Also the extremely high percentages of beech and especially hornbeam do not correspond with what we know about woodland composition from pollen analyses. We must conclude that this charcoal assemblage is the result of a selection in favour of certain species. As beech and hornbeam are both known for their good quality as firewood and for charcoal production, this might be a likely functional explanation. Remarkable is the rather



16 *Total charcoal assemblage.*

[131] Institute for the Archaeological Heritage of the Flemish Community (IAP), Koning Albert II-laan 19, 1st floor, B-1210 Brussels, Belgium.
[132] See Lentacker *et al.*, this volume.
[133] Schweingrüber 1990a, b.
[134] Munaut 1967 & 1988; Mullenders *et al.* 1972.

Table 2
Results of the charcoal analysis for each sample

Ti 98 TR WP 06	*Alnus* sp. alder	*Betula* sp. birch	*Carpinus betulus* hornbeam	*Fagus sylvatica* beech	*Quercus* sp. oak	Bark undiff.	Total
SP027 01 find 044	-	2	-	1	-	-	3
SP027 01 find 064	-	-	3	-	-	-	3
SP027 01 find 168	-	2	15	-	-	-	17
SP027 01 find 174	-	-	1	3	-	-	4
SP027 01 find 176	3	-	34	90	12	1	140
SP027 01 find 178	-	-	-	7	-	-	7
SP101 01 find 095	-	-	2	37	10	-	49
SP101 01 find 116	-	-	39	-	-	-	39
SP101 01 find 120	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Total	3	4	96	138	22	1	264

low value of oak. Oak also has good qualities as firewood and charcoal and oak seems to be the dominant species in most other charcoal assemblages from roman times[135].

No evidence was found for a ritual influence on the selection of wood species as there was for some *Mithraea* in England [136].

It must be stressed that only a small number of charcoal samples were available for analysis, which makes it difficult to make a quantitative interpretation.

[135] De Groote *et al.* 1999/2000; Kreuz 2000.

[136] Charred cones of the Mediterranean stone pine (*Pinus pinea*) were found in Mitraea in London (Grimes 1968) and Carrawburgh (Richmond & Birley, 1951).

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The Symbolic Meaning of the Cock
The Animal Remains from the *Mithraeum* at Tienen (Belgium)

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1 Introduction

During the excavations at the Grijpenveld site at Tienen (Tirlemont, Belgium), directed by Marleen Martens[3], the remains of a *mithraeum* were unearthed. A detailed study of the structural remains of this temple to Mithras, and of the artefacts excavated in connection with the cult place, is presented in a separate report[4]. In that analysis most attention is paid to a large pit found close to the temple building, showing straight walls and stairs leading to the bottom at one side. On the basis of the ceramic finds, this structure must have been filled during the second half of the 3rd century AD. It has been hypothesised that the fill represents a single depositional event, a statement supported by the close chronological framework of the ceramics, and by the taphonomic characteristics of the fill.

Generally, the artefacts from the fill can be divided into two groups, *i.e.* a small number of finds clearly relating to the cult (*e.g.*, a fragment of a *cantharos* with a lion figurine, another fragment of a *cantharos* with the head of Mithras, and a lid decorated with the images of a snake, a *cantharos* and a lion head with a human face), and a large number of ceramics representing what was needed to prepare and serve a banquet, possibly for more than hundred people. Amongst the material, comparable numbers of (about a hundred) boiling pots, cooking vessels, lids, plates and drinking goblets were found. Without doubt, the excavated context represents the remains of a large feast offered to the god[5].

This paper deals with the animal remains from the *mithraeum* pit. These finds mainly come from the bottom layers of the fill and were collected by dry sieving, using a mesh width of 5 mm. Additionally, a number of samples were wet-sieved using meshes of 0.5 mm width. These samples showed that the small mammal and bird remains (smaller than 1 cm) almost all consisted of fragments unidentifiable to species level. However, the samples did contain a significant number of fish bones, of which a minority was identifiable to some extent. No attempt has been made to relate the number of fish remains from the samples to the total number that must have been present in the whole of the fill, but it can safely be assumed that a lot of fish products were deposited in the pit. It was decided to use only the sieved residues for further analysis of the fish fraction. The small fragments of unidentifiable mammal and bird bones have not been counted.

In the upper part of the fill, bones were scarce but the composition of the assemblages and their condition of preservation was the same as that of the material from the bottom layers of the structure. Given the fact that the ceramics also represented a single deposition, with sherds from all parts of the fill fitting together, it was thus decided to treat the animal remains here as one assemblage. It has been taken into account that some residual material was present amongst the ceramics, highlighting the possibility that the same may be true for the animal remains. Bone material that was possibly residual could not be differentiated from the genuine zoological component of the fill on the basis of differences in preservation condition. Generally, all bones from the pit show a high degree of fragmentation and sometimes a somewhat brittle condition. This pattern must be linked in part with their burial in decalcified loamy soil, above groundwater level.

A number of other pits were found close to the *mithraeum*, whose fill contained material identical to that of the large pit. Some sherds from different contexts could be glued together, illustrating that the set of pits was probably filled at the same time. The animal remains from these additional features, however, have not been studied in the same detail as those from the large pit, although it was immediately clear that they shared the same characteristics. The animal remains from the smaller pits are only described briefly in an appendix to the present paper, but the finds numbers will be taken into account when discussing minimum number of individuals (see below).

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[3] Excavations performed by the IAP and the city of Tienen, with the financial support of the Gewestelijke Ontwikkelingsmaatschappij (Regional Development Society) of the province of Vlaams-Brabant.

[4] Martens, this volume. See also a more popular account by Martens 2001 and a short, preliminary finds report in Vanderhoeven *et al.* 2001.

[5] Martens, this volume.

2 Inventory

2.1 Molluscs, amphibians, fish and wild birds

In total, nearly 14,000 animal remains were hand collected from the pit (table 1). Amongst them were a small number of shell fragments from land snails (Helicidae sp.), of which none could be identified to species level. The same is true for the amphibian remains, mostly fragments of long bones. The hand collected fish bones showed the presence of eel (*Anguilla anguilla*), cyprinids (Cyprinidae sp.), and the Spanish mackerel (*Scomber japonicus*). Amongst the cyprinids (members of the carp family), a single bone could be attributed to the genus *Leuciscus*, in which, in our regions, the species orfe (*Leuciscus idus*), dace (*Leuciscus leuciscus*) and chub (*Leuciscus cephalus*) are placed[6]. Another cyprinid bone probably belongs to the same genus but remained classified as 'cf. *Leuciscus* sp.'. The sieved samples (table 1) revealed the presence of many more eel bones and some additional finds of the Spanish mackerel. New, however, was the find of skeletal remains belonging to small clupeids, individuals of the herring family (Clupeidae sp.). Most probably these are bones from (small) herring (*Clupea harengus*) or from sprat (*Clupea sprattus*).

The dimensions of the hand collected eel bones show that at least two specimens are present, one of 70-80 cm[7], and one of 50-60 cm. Most probably both eels were females since males rarely grow larger than 50 cm[8]. Males also tend to stay close to the river mouths whereas females occur far inland[9]. This means that the large eels from Tienen were

[6] Vandelannoote *et al.* 1998, 116-128.

[7] All fish lengths given are standard lengths, measured from the tip of the snout to the base of the tail.

[8] Poll 1947, 161.

[9] Poll 1947, 162-163.

Table 1
Species composition of the animal remains from a large pit excavated near the *mithraeum*. Represented are the finds numbers for both the dry-sieved (5 mm) specimens and the wet-sieved (0.5 mm) material. From the sieved sample only the fish remains have been counted.

recovery technique species	dry-sieved (5mm)	wet-sieved (0,5 mm)
unidentified landsnails (Helicidae sp.)	2	
unidentified amphibians (Amphibia indet.)	26	
eel (*Anguilla anguilla*)	18	74
herring or sprat (Clupeidae sp.)		35
orfe/dace/chub (*Leuciscus* sp.)	1	
cf. *Leuciscus* sp.	1	
unidentified cyprinid (Cyprinidae sp.)	3	
Spanish mackerel (*Scomber japonicus*)	7	5
unidentified fish (Pisces indet.)	5	240
greylag or domestic goose (*Anser anser* f. domestica?)	15	
mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)	1	
unidentified duck (Anatidae sp.)	1	
woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*)	10	
jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)	1	
unidentified songbird (Passeriformes sp.)	1	
domestic fowl (*Gallus gallus* f. domestica)	7615	
unidentified birds (Aves indet.)	1918	
unidentified small mammals (Insectivora / Rodentia sp.)	41	
common shrew (*Sorex araneus*)	1	
woodmouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*)	1	
garden dormouse (*Eliomys quercinus*)	1	
weasel (*Mustela nivalis*)	1	
hare (*Lepus europaeus*)	4	
dog (*Canis lupus* f. familiaris)	2	
pig (*Sus scrofa* f. domestica)	278	
cattle (*Bos primigenius* f. taurus)	77	
sheep or goat (*Ovis ammon* f. aries/ *Capra aegagrus* f. hircus)	314	
sheep (*Ovis ammon* f. aries)	1	
vertebrae, large mammals	45	
vertebrae, small to medium mammals	222	
costae, large mammals	156	
costae, small to medium mammals	710	
unidentified mammals (Mammalia indet.)	2449	
Total	13928	354

not an import from the coast but were probably caught locally. The same is true for the species belonging to the genus *Leuciscus,* which still occur in waters near Tienen[10] and must have been widely available to local fishermen in Roman times. The bones found represent at least one individual, of 40-45 cm. This minimum number does not increase when the unidentified cyprinids are included and the estimate is thus made for the whole of the carp family. In contrast to the species already mentioned, however, herring and sprat are marine species which occur in sea or in the estuaries of rivers[11]. Since they do not migrate further upstream, they must have been brought to the site from the coast or from the estuary of the river Scheldt. Recent archaeological finds strongly suggest that this was done in the form of fish sauce (*garum, allec*) produced along the North Sea coast, an enterprise most probably developed as a commercial reaction to the import of the more expensive Mediterranean fish sauce[12]. The small dimensions of the clupeid bones found fit well within this hypothesis and again corroborate the observation that, in Roman times, larger marine fish were not yet transported inland[13]. An estimate of the minimum number of individuals was not made for the small clupeids, since, within a portion of fish sauce, complete individual fish specimens are not necessarily present. Moreover, all finds come from the sieved samples, which only represent a minor part of the volume excavated. Finally, the remains of the Spanish mackerel come from two individuals, one at 30-35 cm, the other at approximately 40 cm. In Roman times, this fish was traded from south-European coasts to northern Gaul as a salted product (*salsamenta*)[14].

The bird bones from the *mithraeum* pit show the presence of a small number of wild species: an unidentified duck species (Anatidae sp.), woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*), jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*) and an unidentified songbird (Passeriformes sp.). Given the late appearance of the domesticated duck (*Anas platyrhynchos* f. domestica)[15], the single bone belonging to this species must be attributed to the wild form, the mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*). Considering the bones of the goose, it is not clear whether we are dealing with the wild form, the greylag goose (*Anser anser*), or the domesticated one (*Anser anser* f. domestica). Both forms were certainly present in Roman Gaul[16]. It cannot be inferred from the remains of these (possible) wild bird species whether complete individuals (or skeletons) were deposited in the pit. Most species are represented by a single bone, except in the case of the goose and the woodcock. From the inventory of the skeletal elements (not listed here), it is clear that, considering both species, more than one individual is present. The dimensions of the bones found suggest that several elements of the same skeleton were found, but this cannot be proven beyond doubt.

2.2 Domestic fowl

In sharp contrast to the low finds numbers of wild birds is the number of bones of domestic fowl (*Gallus gallus* f. domestica) (table 1). More than half of the hand collected bones from the pit belong to this species, and this estimate could be augmented to more than two thirds, since the large number of unidentifiable bird remains could well belong to domestic fowl too. This category of finds mainly consists of smaller shaft fragments comparable in general size to chickens but without any diagnostic characteristics allowing a species identification beyond doubt. Table 2 lists the finds numbers per skeletal element (see also fig. 1) and makes it clear that all bones of the body are present. Considering the elements of the leg and wing, it was clear that the bones of both body sides were in each case present in approximately equal numbers (counts not presented here). An evaluation of the relative frequency per skeletal element is more difficult to make because a significant part of the bones are fragmented. Moreover, the degree of fragmentation differs between skeletal elements, which in turn has affected their preservation and recovery chances. Bones which have broken into many pieces could be over-represented in the finds numbers, although, on the other hand, smaller fragments could well not have survived or will perhaps have been missed during dry sieving (mesh width was only 5 mm).

In general, the long bones from the wing (humerus, ulna and radius) seem to be present roughly in equal numbers (table 2). The finds number for the carpometacarpus, the femur and the tarsometatarsus are lower, perhaps due to the more robust nature of these bones. The same could be true for the coracoid. The tibiotarsus is apparently more frequently found than any other bone but this long, brittle element can well have suffered a degree of fragmentation higher than that of the other long bones. Fragile elements such as the fibula, the furcula or the scapula are also heavily fragmented but these bones may have left a high number of unrecognisable fragments that were not recovered or were not recognised as fragments of a specific chicken bone. The same explanation can be put forward for the evaluation of the rather low finds numbers of elements of the axial skeleton, i.e. the sternum, the ribs, the sacrum and the pelvis. More problematic is the interpretation of the near absence of small, compact bones that are not easily broken, such as the scapholunar, the cuneiform, the pygostyle, and the phalanges of the wing and the leg. They could have been missed during excavation although it remains equally possible that these elements disappeared during the processing of the chickens (see further). In any case, there seems to be a clear under-representation of cranial elements, with a low finds number for the easily fragmented mandibula and a near absence of frag-

[10] Vandelannoote *et al.* 1998, 116-128.

[11] Poll 1947, 129-136; Vandelannoote *et al.* 1998, 231-235.

[12] Curtis 1991; Van Neer & Lentacker 1994; Van Neer & Ervynck in press.

[13] See Ervynck *et al.* in press for a general overview of the history of the Flemish fishery and the development of the inland trade in marine products.

[14] Curtis 1991; Van Neer & Ervynck in press.

[15] Harper 1972.

[16] See, for example, Benecke (1994).

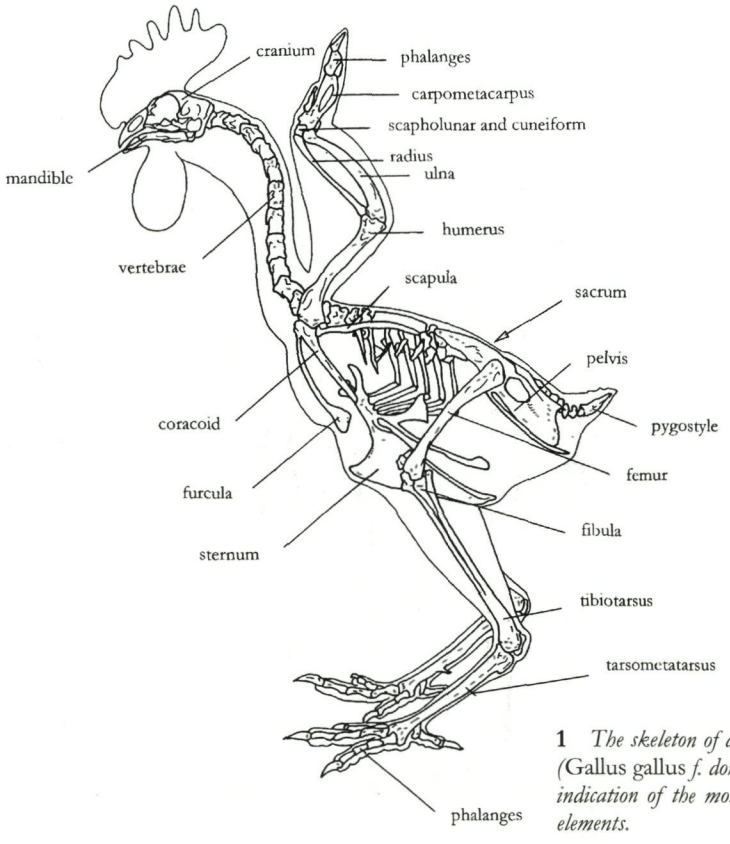
ments of the cranium. Perhaps such an under-representation should also be taken into account for the numbers of vertebrae fragments found.

Although taphonomic reasons will have to be found for the under-representation of certain elements (see further), it can safely be assumed that the fill of the pit contained the remains of the almost complete skeletons of a large number of domestic fowl. Hence, an estimation of the minimum number of individuals (MNI) must be put forward. Since it has been established that bones from the left and right side of the body are equally represented, one could easily take the highest finds number for any skeletal element and divide this number by the times the bone is present within the body. However, certain elements must be disregarded for this estimation, especially those of which the finds numbers are likely to be heavily biased by fragmentation, differential preservation, unequal recovery chances, and other taphonomic influences. The best choice seems to be the most robust long bone, showing the lowest degree of fragmentation, in this case the carpometacarpus. The finds number being 395 for this element, this yields an MNI of nearly 200 birds. This estimation of course follows the assumption that the number of finds equals the number of elements (that all bones are thus complete), and must be refined by taking into account the presence of diagnostic zones per bone (thus evaluating the actual number of elements). However, this will only be attempted after an evaluation of the age profile of the domestic fowl population (see further).

Table 2 also gives an inventory of the skeletal elements found, subdivided as 'adult' and 'subadult' bones. The former category groups the bones that have all the epiphyses (articulation surfaces) completely formed at the ends of the diaphysis (shaft of the bone). The latter group consists of bones that were still growing, with at least one of the epiphyses not yet fully formed. Such a subdivision, however, was only possible for the long bones. Starting from the assumption that in the case of both subadult and adult individuals (nearly) complete skeletons were deposited, the frequency of subadult chickens within the population could be estimated as ranging between 19% (calculated for the fibula) and 37% (on the basis of the humerus). However, the fibula fragments are badly preserved within the collection and many of them (perhaps especially the subadult ones) could have been missed during excavation (see table 2). Therefore, it is perhaps safer to take 25% as the lowest estimate (calculated on the basis of the radius). That the estimation of the frequency of the subadults shows a wide range must be linked with the inherent statistical variation in the survival of the age groups of the different bones, with the differential preservation chances for subadult bones, without doubt more prominent in one skeletal element than in another, and perhaps also with the fact that the long bones of domestic fowl become 'adult' (fully

Table 2
Inventory of the remains of domestic fowl, per skeletal element. For some bones, a distinction was made between adult and subadult specimens.

skeletal element	subadult number	adult number	subadult %	adult %	total number
cranium	-	-	-	-	36
mandibula	-	-	-	-	107
scapula	117	253	31,6	68,4	370
coracoid	178	327	35,2	64,8	505
furcula	-	-	-	-	404
sternum	-	-	-	-	459
humerus	248	415	37,4	62,6	663
radius	150	453	24,9	75,1	603
ulna	201	456	30,6	69,4	657
scapholunar	-	-	-	-	6
cuneiform	-	-	-	-	2
carpometacarpus	-	-	-	-	395
phalanges of the wing	-	-	-	-	85
vertebrae	-	-	-	-	404
ribs	-	-	-	-	462
sacrum	-	-	-	-	129
pelvis	-	-	-	-	398
pygostyle	-	-	-	-	32
femur	139	336	29,3	70,7	475
tibiotarsus	268	504	34,7	65,3	772
fibula	31	129	19,4	80,6	160
tarsometatarsus	120	221	35,2	64,8	341
phalanges of the leg	-	-	-	-	150
total	-	-	-	-	7615



1 *The skeleton of domestic fowl (*Gallus gallus *f. domestica) with indication of the most important elements.*

grown) at slightly different ages in life. It is generally accepted that all bones within the skeleton of the chicken become fully grown around the same age[17], sometimes estimated at around 3.5 months (for a modern, fast-growing breed)[18], but, in fact, few data about the (variation in) timing and sequence of epiphysis growth are available from the literature, and they are especially lacking for the slow-growing, more primitive breeds of the domestic fowl from the past. A limited age variation for the ending of the growth of the skeletal elements can thus not be excluded.

When the difference between adult and subadult bones is taken into account, a new estimation for the MNI of domestic fowl can be made. Even more detail is added when the fragmentation of the long bones is inventoried, per age group, using a distinction between complete bones, proximal fragments, fragments of the shaft and distal fragments, and subdividing these categories into left and right elements (table 3). Subsequently, it is possible to count the presence of these 'diagnostic zones' of a bone instead of the actual fragments.

[17] De Cupere 2001, 33.
[18] Schröder & Michel 1972, cited by Habermehl 1975, 181.
[19] Taken following von den Driesch 1976.
[20] See, e.g., Reichstein & Pieper 1986 for the large collection from Haithabu.

Table 3
Summary of the estimation of the minimum number of individuals of domestic fowl (explanation see text).

			humerus	ulna	tibiotarsus	tarsometatarsus
BONE FRAGMENTS						
adult	complete	left	47	84	25	22
		right	54	82	24	18
	prox fr.	left	50	42	55	28
		right	47	59	56	33
	dist fr.	left	68	71	108	28
		right	67	62	104	26
	diaphysis		84	58	134	66
subadult	complete	left	42	33	31	17
		right	35	33	29	15
	prox fr.	left	25	29	25	2
		right	20	22	24	8
	dist fr.	left	40	32	52	19
		right	43	24	51	20
	diaphysis		41	26	54	39
DIAGNOSTIC ZONES						
adult	proximal	left	97	126	80	50
		right	101	141	80	51
	distal	left	115	155	133	50
		right	121	144	128	44
subadult	proximal	left	67	62	56	19
		right	55	55	53	23
	distal	left	82	65	83	36
		right	78	57	80	35
MNI ESTIMATION						
adult			121	155	133	51
subadult			82	65	83	36
all ages (sum)			203	220	216	87

For the adult and subadult specimens of each skeletal element separately, the MNI estimation is then evaluated as the highest finds number of one of the diagnostic zones (numbers of finds of left or right, proximal or distal zones of that bone, per age group). The highest number for the adult group is then added to the highest number for the subadult group, yielding an MNI estimation for the whole of the population, per bone. This approach, of course, again relies upon the assumption that all epiphyses become fully grown around the same age in life (otherwise a proximal fragment of a presumed adult bone and a distal, still 'subadult' fragment from the same bone could belong to the same individual). This approach was only possible for the humerus, ulna, tibiotarsus and tarsometatarsus and yielded MNIs of 203, 220, 216 and 87 (table 3), indicating that the value of 220 must be the estimation for the whole of the population. Clearly, the tarsometatarsus is shown to be under-represented in the collection. Additionally, when the assumption of a synchronous completion of growth of the epiphyses is again followed, the highest value for the MNI can be evaluated first for all bones belonging to the subadult population, and then for all bones from the adult group. This yields a subadult MNI of 83 (for the tibiotarsus) and an adult MNI of 155 (for the ulna), hence a total of 238 individuals. It should be noted that the estimations of 220 and 238 are slightly higher than the 'rough' estimation of 200 individuals made earlier (see above). However, it must not be forgotten that the MNI estimations only represent minimum values and that, most probably, the actual number of individuals of which the bones have been recovered has been much higher. When the domestic fowl remains from the other, smaller pits near the *mithraeum* (see introduction), are taken into account, the total finds number roughly rises with another 20%. Assuming that the total MNI will increase proportionately, this number must then be estimated to be around 265 to 285.

Measurements have been taken from the chicken bones[19]; the most important ones have been summarised in table 4. Greatest length measurements have been taken for those bones represented by high numbers of complete, adult specimens. It should be noted that the number of complete adult bones listed in table 3 is sometimes slightly higher than the number of greatest lengths listed in table 4. This is due to the fact that bones were sometimes labelled 'complete' although they showed slight damage, in some cases hampering measuring. In the case of the incomplete bones, damage to the articular surfaces of the distal or proximal fragments often made the taking of breadth measurements impossible. For the present analysis, only greatest length measurements were used. Remarkably, these greatest lengths all show a unimodal distribution for all bones measured (fig. 2). It was expected that the values should show bimodal distributions[20] because of the sexual

Table 4
Summary of the measurements taken on the most important domestic fowl bones.

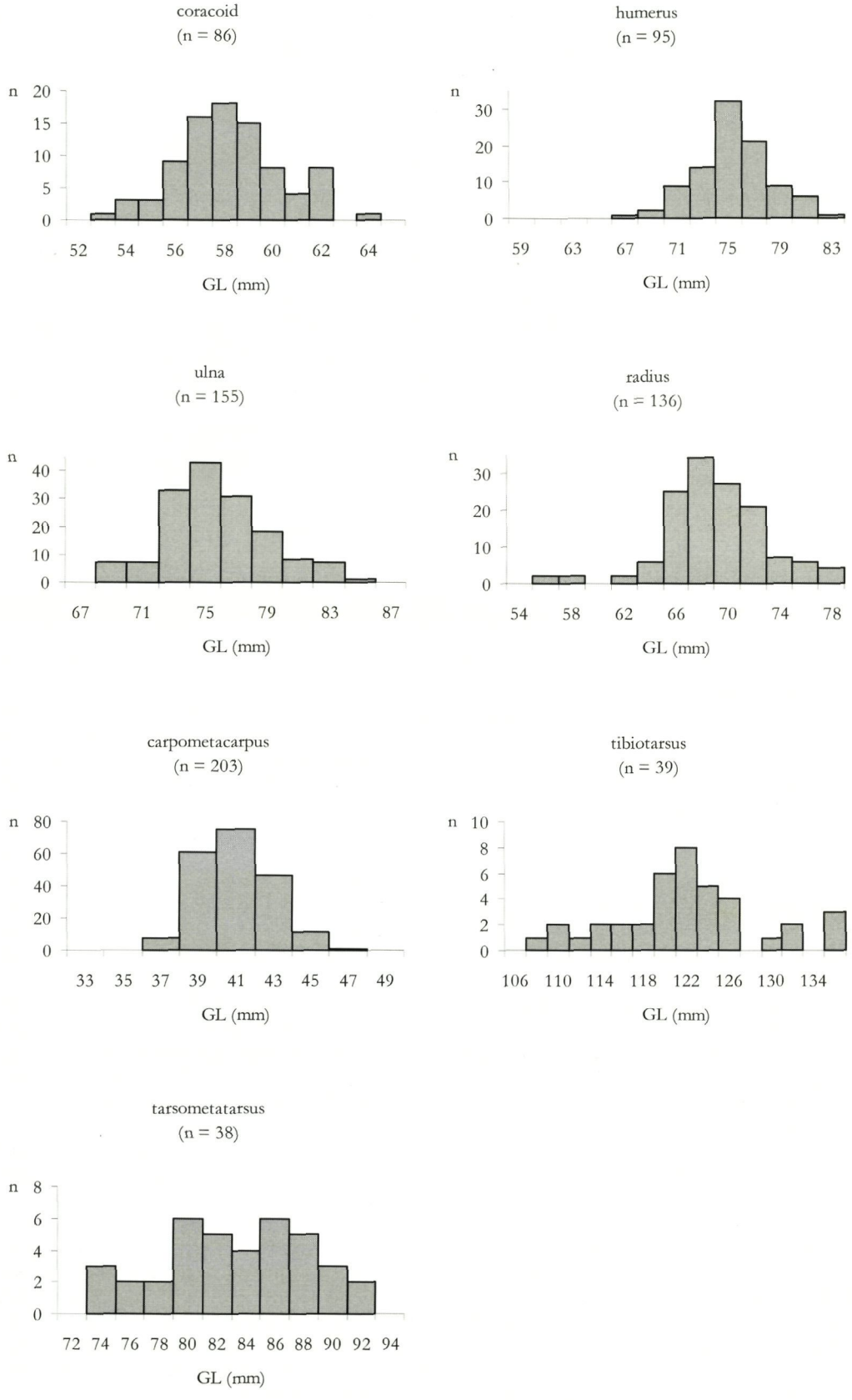
skeletal element	measurement	min	max	mean	s dev	n
coracoid	GL	54,2	76,8	68,0	3,9	136
humerus	GL	68	82,8	75,4	2,9	95
	Bp	16,6	24	20,3	1,1	162
	SC	6,2	10	7,5	0,5	133
	Bd	14,1	17,8	16	0,8	188
ulna	GL	69	84,2	75,8	3,3	155
	Bp	7,7	10,8	9,5	0,5	244
	Dip	11,5	16	13,7	0,8	232
	SC	4,1	7	4,9	0,3	214
	Did	8,4	11,8	10,2	0,5	286
radius	GL	52,6	63,5	57,9	2,2	86
carpometacarpus	GL	36,1	46,7	41	1,9	203
	Bp	10,8	13,9	12,4	0,6	231
	Did	5,7	13,1	7,8	0,6	230
tibiotarsus	GL	106,6	134,2	120,9	6,7	39
	La	102,1	129,7	115,6	6,0	48
	Dip	17,3	25	22,1	1,3	131
	SC	5,7	12,9	7	0,8	168
	Bd	9,6	14,5	12,1	0,7	222
	Dd	6	15	12,9	0,8	214
tarsometatarsus	GL	72,8	91,8	82,4	5,0	38
	Bp	11,1	16,3	14,2	0,8	84
	SC	5,7	8,7	7,2	0,6	60
	Bd	11,8	15,8	14	0,9	69

dimorphism in domestic fowl[21]. The patterns observed could thus indicate that only one sex is present within the adult domestic fowl population. In the absence of large finds assemblages from the Low Countries, the osteometrical data have been compared with assemblages from the Roman period in northern France[22]. In the case of the humerus, it can clearly be seen graphically that the length measurements gathered at Tienen correspond with the male part of the Roman fowl population from France (fig. 3)[23]. That this conclusion is valid for all bones can be seen from a comparison of the data listed in table 4 with the corresponding data from Roman northern France[24]. When the measurements taken from the domestic fowl remains from the other, smaller pits near the *mithraeum* are included in the analysis (data not represented here), the conclusions remain the same. The conclusion that all adult domestic fowl from the structure investigated were male can be tested against the presence or absence of a spur on the tarsometatarsus. However, this sexual trait has often been misinterpreted within archaeozoological studies. The conclusions of a recent review[25] can be listed as follows: (1) female tarsometatarsi have no bony spur, except in the (rare) case of individuals with some hormonal disorder; (2) male tarsometatarsi can have no spur (very young adults), a bony spur scar (somewhat older animals) or a bony spur. The absence of any spur scar or spur in very young male adults is explained by the fact that the tarsometatarsus becomes fully grown ('adult') before the bony core of the spur fuses with the shaft of the bone (the initial phase of this fusion being represented by the formation of a spur scar). Although the part of the bone where the absence or presence of a spur could be evaluated was only preserved in 37 of the tarsometatarsi (fig. 4), it can clearly be seen that the majority of these bones came from male fowl. Certainly, the 'all male' hypothesis is not contradicted. Further corroboration can be found in the absence of medullary bone in the chicken bone collection from the *mithraeum*. Medullary bone is secondary bone formed within the marrow cavity of the long bones of domestic fowl, used as a calcium reserve for egg shell production during the laying season, and thus possibly only present in females. However, recent research reveals that it could well be possible that in fowl populations living in areas where calcium was not available in excess, medullary bone development could be minimal[26].

The subadult bones could obviously not be sexed. The presence of females within this group can thus not be excluded. It can be hypothesised that, because of the exclusively male composition of the adult population, this was also the case for the subadult group, but there is no proof to support this statement. The possible presence of castrated males (capons) is not discussed here. The assessment of castration within domestic fowl populations is heavily debated within archaeozoology[27],

21 Benecke 1989.
22 Lepetz 1996, 71-76.
23 Lepetz 1996, 72, fig. 88.
24 Lepetz 1996, 72, table LXXI.
25 De Cupere 2001, 33.
26 Van Neer *et al.* 2002.
27 Peters 1997.

2 *Distributions of the greatest lengths of the most important bones of domestic fowl (n: finds numbers).*

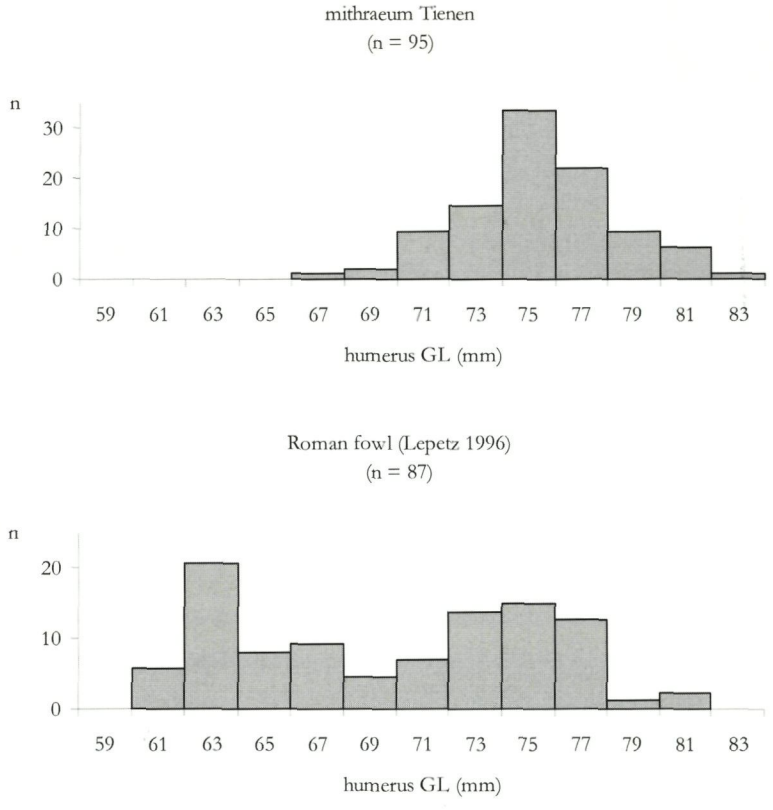


and this problem may be addressed in future work. A last remarkable observation made on the tarsometatarsi is the fact that some spurs had been cut off. Other spurs are malformed, only showing a broad base upon which a body of exostoses had formed. Most probably, these were spurs that had been cut off, after which new bone had begun to form. It should be noted that animals with such malformed spurs have been described as capons[28], which is probably wrong, but, again, this subject does not come within the scope of the present contribution.

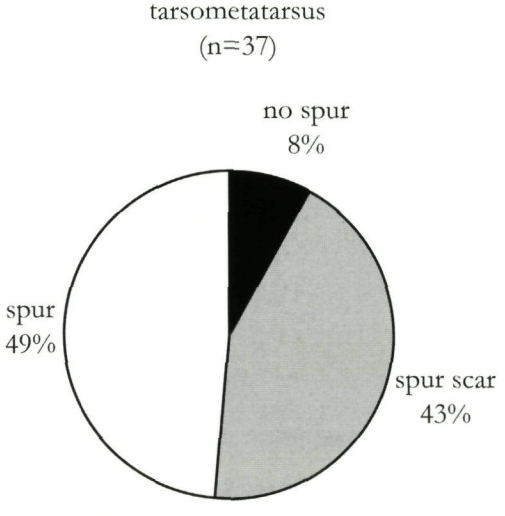
When the distribution of the lengths of the subadult bones is plotted in comparison to that of the adult specimens, as for example for the humerus (fig. 5), there is a strong suggestion that within the subadult group a large variety of ages are present (assuming that they are all male), ranging from very small animals to chickens that had already reached adult heights. Assessing more detailed ages within the adult group is only possible by measuring the length of the spur, which is related to age. For modern herds of traditional breeds, it has been established that the length reaches 15 mm at the age of 1 year, after which it would increase by another 10 mm per year[29]. Within the population of Tienen, spur lengths have been measured varying between 10 and 23 mm, indicating the presence of animals up to 2 years old. However, in reality, this age at death must have been much higher, since traditional breeds of domestic animals are likely to have grown considerably more slowly than is the case with modern breeds now.

Cutting traces have been observed on the humerus, ulna, and carpometacarpus but were especially frequent on the dorsal side of the distal part of the tibiotarsus, close to the articulation surface of the bone. An important proportion of the adult chicken bones also show traces of burning. There is no clear pattern for their distribution over the skeleton but the traces systematically consist of brownish to grey colouring, indicating a rather low exposure to fire, not comparable to, for example, the white colour of cremated bones. The burning traces are also not evenly distributed over the bone, but only, rather randomly, present in certain areas. The subadult bones rarely show burning traces, except, rather systematically, in the case of the distal ulna and the distal part of the tibiotarsus. These traces are also brown to grey.

3 *Comparison of the distribution of the greatest lenght of the humerus of domestic fowl from the mithraeum at Tienen, with that from Roman fowl from northern France (data compiled by Lepetz 1996) (n: finds numbers).*



4 *Frequency of the presence of a spur, or a spur scar, on the tarsometatarsus (n: finds number).*

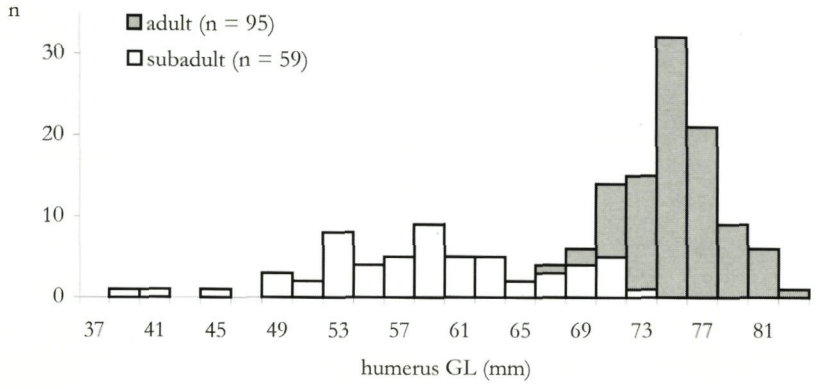


2.3 Mammals

A limited number of small mammal bones were collected, mostly consisting of postcranial material from small insectivores or rodents, that has not been identified to species. Three mandibles, however, could be identified to species, showing the presence of the common shrew (*Sorex araneus*), the wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), and the garden dormouse (*Eliomys quercinus*). These animals still occur in the area around the site[30]. A single cranial fragment could be attributed to the weasel (*Mustela nivalis*), a carnivore also present in the area around Tienen. The same is true for the hare (*Lepus europaeus*), represented by four bones, of which one (a scapula) shows cutting traces.

[28] Lepetz 1996, 71-72.
[29] Habermehl 1975, 182.
[30] Lange *et al.* 1986.

5 *Distribution of the greatest lenght of the humerus of domestic fowl for both adult and subadult birds (n: finds numbers).*



The remains of domestic mammals from the fill comprise the bones of dog (*Canis lupus* f. familiaris), pig (*Sus scrofa* f. domestica), cattle (*Bos primigenius* f. taurus), and sheep or goat (*Ovis ammon* f. aries/ *Capra aegagrus* f. hircus). Of dog only two bones were found, amongst them a complete tibia indicating a withers height of 43 cm[31]. The skeletal elements found from pig, cattle, and sheep or goat are listed in table 5. Although in Roman sites sheep always outnumber goat, in only one case (a sheep bone) it was possible to make the distinction between the two species. This pattern is strongly related with the fact that all the small ruminant bones came from very young animals of comparable age, with, in the case of the long bones, both epiphyses still unfused to the shaft of the bone. The same is true for the remains of pig. The cattle bones, however, come from older animals. Another difference between the remains of cattle, on the one hand, and pig and sheep on the other, lies in the presence of all bones from the skeleton for the latter group, often complete or in fragments that can be fitted together again, whilst the cattle remains are dominated by loose teeth, and by small fragments from large bones or even from parts of the skeleton that do not yield much meat. Indeed, the finds suggest that the pig and sheep remains represent complete skeletons, partially preserved, whilst the cattle bones seem to comprise mainly general habitation refuse, as found in all types of contexts, in all sorts of Roman sites. The only quality beef represented by the bones from the fill could be that from around the vertebrae and ribs. These skeletal elements have not been identified to species but, given the species composition of the material from the fill, the category of vertebrae and ribs of large mammals may consist almost exclusively of cattle remains. The vertebrae and ribs of medium to small mammals are all from very young individuals and must correspond with the skeletal elements found from young pigs and sheep.

The ages at death of the pigs and the sheep have been reconstructed by the observation of the molar wear stages (MWS) on the mandibles (table 6)[32]. At the same time, the mandibles have been used to estimate the MNI for each species. The results show that at least 12 sheep have been slaughtered at the same, very young age (of 11 the MWS could be observed, another fragment of a left mandible certainly belonged to a 12th individual). The MWS of 1 to 3 indicates that the age of death must have followed quite shortly after birth. The same is true for a MNI of 6 piglets, all slaughtered around the same age, shortly after birth (MWS 1 to 2). Additionally, a single pig mandible has been found from an animal that reached an older age (MWS of 9). Another, rostral fragment of a pig mandible certainly belonged to another individual (the elements do not fit together) but, on the basis of the eruption state of the canines, belongs to the same age group as the mandible with MWS 9. In total, the remains of at least 8 piglets must thus have been deposited in the pit.

Table 5
Inventory of the remains of pig, cattle and scheep/ goat, per skeletal element. In the case of the pig no distinction was made between metacarpals and metatarsals; these elements have been grouped as 'metapodals'.

skeletal element	pig	cattle	sheep/goat
cranium	22	3	10
maxilla	9		8
mandibula	16		32
teeth	58	24	61
hyoid			4
total head	**105**	**27**	**115**
scapula	14	1	10
humerus	19	3	20
radius	6	1	23
ulna	10		8
metacarpus	-	1	7
total front leg	**49**	**5**	**68**
pelvis	10	2	16
femur	9	7	12
tibia	16	2	20
fibula	11		
patella		1	
astragalus	3		7
calcaneus	10		3
metatarsus	-	4	8
total hind leg	**59**	**16**	**66**
metapodals	40	-	-
phalanges	23	12	44
total feet	**23**	**12**	**44**
others	**2**	**16**	**22**
total identified	**278**	**77**	**315**

[31] Measurements following von den Driesch 1976; reconstruction of the withers height following von den Driesch & Boessneck 1974.

[32] Following Grant 1982.

These MNI numbers become 10 for the pigs, and 14 for the sheep when the bones from the other, smaller pits near the *mithraeum* are taken into account. The age estimates from these additional animals are the same as for those from the large pit.

Given the nature of the assemblage (very young bones from pig and sheep, and fragmented material from cattle), an evaluation of the sex frequencies could not be made for the domestic animal populations. A biometrical analysis was useless for the same reasons. In the case of the pig, cutting traces were only observed on a scapula but burning traces were more common. Some bones showed brown colouring as the result of a minimal exposure to fire, but some were burnt to the extent that the bone had become white (as in cremations). Similar burning traces were also present on the sheep bones. Cutmarks were only found on a sheep's hyoid bone and on a distal metacarpus. On the cattle bones no remarkable traces were found.

Table 6
Molar wear stages (MWS: Grant 1985) of the pig and sheep mandibles.

n°	side	Pd4	P4	M1	M2	M3	MWS
PIG							
1	left	b	-	V	-	-	2
2	left	b	-	V	-	-	2
3	left	c	-	V	-	-	2
4	left	b	-	C	-	-	1
5	left	b	-	C	-	-	1
6	left	b	-	V	-	-	2
7	left	?	-	b	V	-	9
8	right	a	-	C	-	-	1
9	right	a	-	C	-	-	1
10	right	a	-	C	-	-	1
11	right	c	-	V	-	-	2
SHEEP							
1	left	f	-	E	-	-	3
2	left	c	-	C	-	-	1
3	left	d	-	E	-	-	3
4	left	f	-	E	-	-	3
5	left	f	-	E	-	-	3
6	left	e	-	V	-	-	2
7	left	d	-	V	-	-	2
8	left	c	-	C	-	-	1
9	left	f	-	E	-	-	3
10	left	f	-	E	-	-	3
11	left	c	-	C	-	-	1
12	right	d	-	V	-	-	2
13	right	b	-	V	-	-	2
14	right	e	-	E	-	-	3
15	right	e	-	E	-	-	3
16	right	c	-	C	-	-	1
17	right	e	-	V	-	-	2
18	right	e	-	V	-	-	2
19	right	f	-	E	-	-	3
20	right	b	-	C	-	-	1
21	right	c	-	C	-	-	1

3 Taphonomy: from the preparation of the banquet to the removal of the waste

When the animal remains from the pit are subdivided into taphonomic groups[33], they fall apart in several categories. First of all, the majority of the finds clearly represents consumption refuse. Human consumption is indeed the only conceivable explanation for the presence of fish remains at the site. The location of the site, and the characteristics of the structure excavated, contradict any interpretation of it as a natural death assemblage. The wild bird bones can also all have been debris from consumption, except perhaps for the jackdaw, a bird that today is considered to be inedible. Of course, ideas about edibility change through time. On the other hand, it must be considered that black birds (except perhaps for *Turdus merula* but certainly for *Corvus* species) were (and are) unpopular in many societies. The fragmentation of the bones, and the presence of cutting and burning traces, indicate that domestic fowl, hare, pigs and sheep were eaten at the site. This is likely to be the case also for cattle, although a part of the bones of this species could be intrusive. The latter interpretation is difficult to prove but the presence of smaller fragments of the skeleton that do not bear any significant amount of meat points in that direction. The loose cattle teeth could also belong to this category of intrusives. Most probably, some cattle bones were already present in the soil with which the pit was filled. Stray animal remains are indeed present throughout the site at Tienen. Finally, the land snails and small mammal remains (shrew, woodmouse, garden dormouse, weasel) will also represent intrusives, and some of them may be more recent than the deposition of the pit's fill. The woodmouse[34] and the garden dormouse[35] are burrowing animals, and the weasel (which does not build a real underground nest[36]) could have become trapped when following possible prey. The common shrew digs holes itself or visits the burrows of other small animals[37].

Considering the consumption refuse, the most interesting taphonomical approach is to try to reconstruct how the animal remains ended up in the fill, and why they display the characteristics described earlier. Starting with the domestic fowl, the intraskeletal distribution can be explained by the deposition of the remains of complete individuals, with some parts of the body almost always removed beforehand (heads, part of the vertebrae, feet). Taking into account the effects of (unequal degrees of) fragmentation, differential preservation, and unequal recovery chances, it can be envisaged that the process started when complete chickens were beheaded and prepared for cooking. This probably also involved cutting off the feet and the lower part of the legs, which could explain the low frequency within the collection of the

33 *Sensu* Gautier 1987.
34 Frechkop 1958, 459.
35 Frechkop 1958, 427.
36 Frechkop 1958, 246-248.

tarsometatarsi and of the phalanges of the leg. The cutting marks on the dorsal side of the distal tibiotarsus suggest that cuts were made on the joint between tibiotarsus and tarsometatarsus. Perhaps the animals' necks were also removed, explaining the under-representation of vertebrae in the assemblage. The small phalanges in the distal end of the wings, if not missed during excavation, could have disappeared from the skeleton when, during the removal of the plumage, parts of the skin (and underlying flesh) were ripped away. Perhaps the pygostyle underwent the same fate when the tail was cut off? Other under-represented small bones, such as the scapholunar or the cuneiform, may simply have been overlooked during excavation.

It is, of course, difficult to reconstruct the actual cooking process used to prepare slaughtered chickens for consumption. However, the burning traces on the bones suggest that the animals were fried rather than boiled. More precisely, the burning traces on the subadult bones, concentrated on the distal ulna and the distal part of the tibiotarsus, could suggest that this category of fowl was broiled on the spit. The joints between the ulna and the carpometacarpus, and between the tibiotarsus and the tarsometatarsus, are the body parts that stick out most when a chicken is prepared this way. The larger, adult chickens, however, show (mild) burning marks on all skeletal elements, which perhaps suggests another preparation method, for example the frying or roasting of chickens that had been cut up. It must be noted that the presence and distribution of burning traces on the adult chicken skeleton cannot be explained by the idea that they were thrown in a fire after their meat had been eaten. If that had been the case, the bones would be white, or at least have scorch marks spread evenly over the bone.

There are not enough hare bones to say anything about the cooking of this animal. The lambs and piglets seem to have been prepared as whole animals. Broiling on a spit was perhaps again the method used. From these two species, part of the bones were burned white, which would indicate that they were thrown in the fire after their meat had been eaten. This colouration could not reflect a cooking practice because when the bones are burned white their meat has been completely carbonised. The cattle bones do not reveal information on their preparation as food. The fish bones found point to the use of *garum* and *salsamenta*. The freshwater fish (two large eels and a *Leuciscus* sp.) could have been prepared in a number of ways (for example, boiling, poaching in liquid, or baking in embers), with the same effect on their bones.

The observations made indicate that the fill of the pit mainly consists of table leftovers. It would seem that a small number of freshwater fish, salted fish products, some wild birds, around 285 chickens, 14 lambs, 10 piglets and a number of beef parts were eaten and what was left was dropped in the large pit and in the other, smaller structures investigated. At least one of the dishes was spiced up with *garum*. It is highly probable that the meal took place near the site of the pit, otherwise all the leftovers would have had to be transported and a lot of the smaller material would have been lost. A remaining problem is identifying the slaughtering place. Because their complete skeletons were found, the sheep and pig remains cannot answer this question, while the cattle were presumably not slaughtered close to the site. In the case of the domestic fowl, it is unclear whether the cutting off of heads, probably neck, and feet took place close to the site of the pit. Most butchery remains did not end up in the structure excavated but it may still have been deposited in the vicinity, above ground. This might explain why they were not preserved in the archaeological record of the site, as the Roman surface layers have eroded away[38]. On the other hand, a small number of cranial fragments and bones from the lower parts of the legs are present within the collection studied. This might indicate that some (but certainly not all) of the slaughtering refuse of chickens ended up in the pit, a pattern that could be explained by the idea that the consumption leftovers have first been deposited on the ground (at the place of consumption) and that this surface has afterwards been cleaned, perhaps because the leftover material was swept into the pit after the feast's end. During this process some butchery remains, deposited nearby, might have become accidentally buried as well. What is sure is that if the leftovers from the meal were first deposited on the ground, they did not stay there for long, because otherwise the bones would have shown a high frequency of gnaw marks from scavengers. Finally, the pit was filled completely, using sediment in which some residual bones were already present. After this deposition, the fill was invaded by more recent intrusives.

4 The timing of a single event

The hypothesis that the pit was filled during one event, put forward on the basis of the stratigraphy and the analysis of the ceramics[39], is corroborated by the present study of the animal remains, more precisely by the ages of the slaughtered mammals from the large pit. The tooth rows of 11 of the 12 sheep (number of individuals estimated by the MNI calculations) all show the same wear stage and thus indicate a same age of death[40] (the age of the 12th individual could not be evaluated). Given the fact that in traditional sheep husbandry lambs are born only once a year, this indicates that all sheep of which the bones were found within the *mithraeum* pit died in the same part of the year. Because the sedimentological characteristics of the fill indicate that the structure was not exposed to the weather for a long time, it must be concluded that all lambs in the pit died in the same part of the same year. This pattern is the same for

37 Lange *et al.* 1986, 73.
38 Martens, this volume.
39 Martens, this volume.
40 Taking into account the variation in the birth dates, and of tooth eruption and wear, see Ervynck 1997.

the piglets from the pit; 6 out of 8 show the same molar wear stage (MWS). The other two show an older age, which may, however, still indicate the same slaughtering season as that of the first six: pigs can litter twice a year (see further).

When the MWS stages are translated into estimates of real age at death (fig. 6), the interpretation of the timing of the deposition becomes clearer. On the basis of the eruption stages of the teeth[41], the MWS of the tooth rows of 6 of the piglets can be translated into a slaughter age of two to three months. Assuming that, in a traditional breed, piglets were born around April[42], this would point to June or July, as the period of deposition. Two of the subadult pigs show ages that do not fit into this pattern (on the basis of the tooth eruption stages they were 8 months and somewhat more than 8 months old, respectively), but when we suggest that they could have come from a litter born in September, this also points to June or July for the time of slaughtering. Within a traditional breeding system, pigs can produce two litters a year when there is enough food available, and such a second farrowing could occur in late summer or early autumn[43]. Theoretically, a combination of pigs of 3 and 8 months old could also indicate a slaughter in December (with two of them being born in spring and six in early autumn), but this possibility is contradicted by the presence of 11 lambs slaughtered at around the age of three months (an interpretation again based upon the comparison of the known chronology of the eruption of teeth in sheep with the observations of eruption and wear made on the finds)[44]. Within a traditional animal husbandry system, sheep are only born once a year, in early spring[45], which again points to an age at death around June or July. All this would mean that the Mithras pit was filled at the beginning of summer of a particular year during the second half of the third century AD.

5 Reconstruction of the banquet

The above observations and interpretations permit a tentative reconstruction of the events that took place shortly before the filling of the pit. Since the structure was filled in one event, this means that the food remains found could have resulted from one enormous banquet. The reconstruction of the minimum number of individuals tells us that, apart from the *garum* and *salsamenta*, at least 3 fish, 285 chickens, a number of wild birds, (probably) a hare, 10 piglets, 14 lambs and a quantity of beef were served. This suggests that at least 285 persons could have been present at the meal, and if everybody restricted themselves to half a chicken, this number could be doubled! It should be noted that the estimation of the number of guests on the basis of food remains is significantly higher than that on the basis of the ceramics (somewhat higher than hundred people) but guests may have shared plates and cooking pots. On the other hand, it is possible that we are dealing not with one meal but with a series of meals all served within a short period, for example during a festival of several days. In that case the number of participants could have been considerably lower, perhaps the hundred estimated on the basis of the ceramics. However, it is not possible that the refuse dumped in the pit was the result of festivities stretched out over weeks or months.

A large group of people may have brought with them one or more food items[46] to be eaten at the feast. Whether these food products came already prepared or were cooked and roasted at the feast, is difficult to establish. However, the charcoal found in the pit[47] suggests that one fire at least was built in the vicinity, and, in the case of the domestic fowl, at least some slaughtering offal was produced. If most of the slaughtering refuse was deposited above ground, and thus not preserved, it is possible that the killing of the animals, and

41 Method explained in Ervynck 1997, eruption data following Habermehl 1975.
42 Williams 1977.
43 See for second farrowing: Ervynck & Dobney 2002.
44 Method explained in Ervynck 1997, eruption data following Habermehl 1975.
45 Williams 1977.
46 As they did with their crockery: Martens, this volume.
47 Deforce's appendix to Martens, this volume.

6 *Schematic representation of the reconstruction of the timing of the banquet on the basis of the slaughter ages of the lambs and piglets. Indicated are the ages (in months, B: birth) the animals reach within each month of the year. The combination of slaughter ages of 2-3 and 8-9 months for the pigs and 3-4 for the sheep, in a single depositional event points to June-July for the timing of that event.*

	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.		n
Pig																	
1st farrowing	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		6
2nd farrowing	B	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		2
Sheep																	
1st lambing	-	-	-	-	-	B	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		11

possibly even the cooking itself, took place at the temple. Finds from other *mithraea* have produced excavation evidence of cooking places[48]. The excavation of the temple at Tienen has not revealed the presence of a kitchen but it must be stressed that within the temple domain there was hardly room for one[49].

Dry archaeozoological interpretations cannot encompass the wealth of culinary practices hidden behind the table leftovers found in the pit. The meal served at the *mithraeum* could have been diverse, produced by a wide variety of culinary techniques, involving boiling, frying, roasting, broiling at the spit, and perhaps serving raw. The possibility of vegetable or fruit ingredients, and the use of many herbs and spices, must not be forgotten, even though they almost completely evade our attention[50], as would animal ingredients which leave no archaeologically preservable remains (such as meat or meat products without bone, or fish with a cartilaginous skeleton). The banquet served at the *mithraeum* could have been much more interesting gastronomically than archaeology reveals.

6 Gastronomy, or religion?

Now that it has been established that the large early summer event at the *mithraeum* at Tienen was a banquet, it must still be asked whether dining together was the only purpose of the gathering. Being nourished was most probably not the most important goal to be achieved by the festivity. On the contrary, it is conceivable that the gathering at the temple had a higher meaning. Discussing this, a distinction must be made between the killing of the animals, their consumption, and the disposal of the waste. Considering the slaughter, it has been argued that it cannot be proven that this took place near or within the temple, although this possibility can also not be ruled out. The slaughtering could thus have been a purely practical matter, and have nothing to do with the ritual sacrifice of living beings. It is sure, however, that the animals killed were eaten. It must be stressed that we are not dealing with the carcasses of sacrificed animals left for the god but not eaten by the worshippers. The traces of consumption found on the animal remains (see taphonomy) contradict the latter hypothesis. This does not mean that the food served at the banquet could not represent offerings to the god. The deposition of the leftovers of the meal could have been a ritual act. That these leftovers were first thrown on the ground and then buried in a pit (not, for example, dumped in a midden) indicates that they were meant to be sent to the god. In Roman tradition, food became an offering to the gods in the underworld when it was thrown on the floor, even when meals were taken at home.

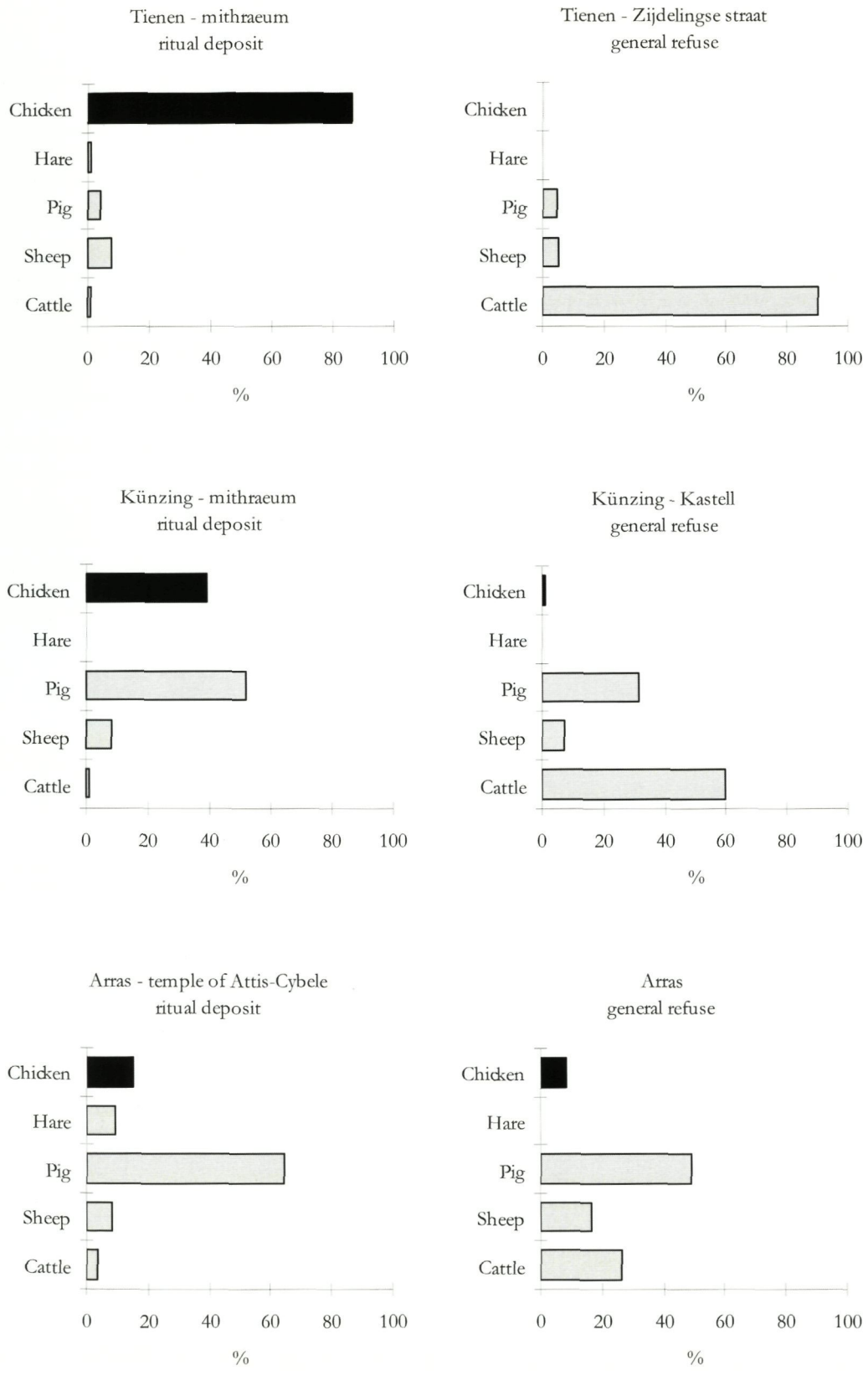
It is known that a communal meal was part of the liturgy within the Mithras cult[51]. The question must now be asked whether gastronomical quality was the only criterion on which the ingredients for the banquet were selected. Culinary value did play a role in the composition of the menu, since most of the animal food products consumed were of high quality, indicated by the young slaughter ages of the piglets and lambs. Considering the overall frequency of species, the abundance of domestic fowl could also point in that direction. Chicken was a highly esteemed meat product in the Roman cuisine[52]. The Mithras context can also be compared with a bone assemblage consisting of general consumption refuse (found at Tienen at the 'Zijdelingse straat' site, during the excavation of a Roman street surface and its adjacent open space) (fig. 7)[53]. Even taking into account possible taphonomic biases, it is clear that two characteristics discriminate the assemblages: the frequency of the chicken remains (high in the ritual deposit and negligible in the general refuse) and the frequency of the cattle bones (near absent in the ritual pit and extremely high in the general consumption refuse). It is commonly known that cattle, although being the most important source of meat for large and small towns in Roman Gaul, was not regarded as an interesting or high status meat in terms of gastronomy. The near avoidance of beef at the Mithras meal, together with the dominance of domestic fowl and the presence of young piglets and lambs may suggest that people were bringing food items that were appreciated for their taste and, at the same time, for their market value. Their higher price would make them more meaningful as an offer. A parallel can be drawn with the food items presented as a meal for the deceased within funerary contexts. It has been shown that, in northern Gaul, pork was the most common funerary food gift in the earlier Roman contexts, while in the later contexts chicken was the most popular[54]. The choice of these animals at this feast was most probably guided by their gastronomic status and not by their possible symbolic meaning within the beliefs around the passage to the hereafter.

Whether the other animal products from the Mithras pit can corroborate a high gastronomic status of the assemblage is unclear. Game was extremely rare in the assemblage, and only represented by hare bones and a small number of the remains of wild birds. The social value (in Roman times) of the fish products found is also questionable. *Garum* and *salsamenta*, being part of the Mediterranean cooking tradition, were probably highly valued in Gaul during the earlier period of Roman occupation, but whether they still had this status during the 3rd century AD is not known[55]. The culinary value of freshwater fish is certainly hard to evaluate, given the scarce information about these food products from Gallo-Roman sites in Belgium[56].

A parallel to the finds at Tienen is provided by the archaeozoological study of the German site of Künzing (fig. 7)[57]. There, the excavation of a

48 Schatzmann, this volume.
49 See again Martens, this volume.
50 Cooremans' appendix to Martens, this volume.
51 Beck 2000, 145, note 3, and the references there.
52 *E.g.* Lepetz 1996.
53 Verriest 1999.
54 Lepetz 1996.
55 Van Neer & Ervynck in press.
56 Van Neer & Ervynck 1994.
57 von den Driesch & Pöllath 2000.

7 *Comparison between the species frequencies within the consumption refuse of a religious site and of a secular site, for the Roman settlements of Tienen, Künzing (data from von den Driesch & Pöllath 2000) and Arras (data from Lepetz 1996).*



mithraeum also yielded a high frequency of chicken bones and a near absence of cattle remains. Comparing the finds with the general food refuse of the site, patterns similar to those found at Tienen can be observed. The generally higher frequencies of pig at the German site may only be a reflection of the presence of more woodland around that site, compared to the most probably deforested landscape of Roman Tienen. When the faunal material from the Crypta Balbi *mithraeum* at Rome is compared with that of a secular context from the same location, the only meaningful difference can be found in the significantly higher frequency of chicken bones at the temple (20% versus 7%)[58]. However, caution must be taken when using these data because the contexts compared are not completely synchronous. At Martigny (Switzerland), the composition of the animal remains from the urban *mithraeum* (pig: 47%, chicken: 31%, sheep and goat: 17%, cattle: 5%) is quite different from that of other contexts from the same area (pig: 33%, chicken: 2%, sheep and goat: 16%, cattle: 44%), with chicken and cattle numbers again varying most significantly[59]. At Orbe-Boscéaz (Switzerland), the bone collection from a *mithraeum* associated with a large villa at the countryside (pig: 46%, chicken: 33%, sheep and goat: 4%, cattle: 16%) could be compared with faunal contexts from the villa itself (pig: 62%, chicken: 13%, sheep and goat: 6%, cattle: 18%). Here, the differences are less clear although a trend is again present in the chicken frequencies[60]. It must also be noted that both Swiss *mithraea* yielded highly comparable consumption remains, while town and villa differed considerably in this respect.

Additional support for a possible link between the Mithras cult and the dominance of chicken at the feasts can be found in the reports from other excavations of *mithraea*, although the lack of comparison with 'normal' contexts from the same period and area, and the occasional uncertainty about recovery methodology or taphonomical conditions, makes the evidence somewhat less substantial. Nevertheless, chicken bones were the commonest animal remains recovered at the *mithraeum* of London (UK)[61]. This was also the case at the *mithraeum* at Septeuil (France), where the bones of domestic fowl reached 74% of the identified finds (n= 8612 identified remains)[62]. At the *mithraeum* at Zillis (Switzerland), domestic fowl were frequently found[63] but this abundance was not as dominant as, for example, at Tienen. Domestic fowl was also abundant at the 'Kugelstein' site (Austria), a location also interpreted as a *mithraeum*[64]. Based on MNI estimations, domestic fowl was the most abundant species amongst the animal remains from the *mithraeum* in the army camp of Aquincum (Hungary)[65]. From a number of other *mithraea* only an occasional description of some animal remains is available (mostly because of the small number of finds), making it impossible to evaluate the numerical importance of domestic fowl remains[66].

So far, nothing more has been suggested than that the high frequencies of domestic fowl remains within the context of *mithraea* are linked with the high quality of the meals served. However, it could be that the differences between the rich banquets and the general consumption refuse hide the symbolic meaning of some of the ingredients. A first indication for the latter statement comes from the comparison of the data for the Attis-Cybele temple at Arras in northern France, with a general context from the same town (fig. 7)[67]. It is clear that cattle is less frequent within the food refuse from the Cybele sanctuary while pig is more abundant. This again indicates the higher status of the food consumed in the temple. In the contexts associated with Cybele, however, chicken does not dominate as in the Mithras contexts, which could be seen as corroboration for a possible link between Mithras and domestic fowl. Recently, the frequencies of the species represented within the animal remains from the temple have been reviewed by the incorporation of faunal material from sieved samples[68] but, given the fact that this adjustment has not been possible for the 'secular' contexts from this site, this does not help the interpretations. It is of course beyond the scope of this paper to review all faunal assemblages from Roman temples but, in general, chicken bones seem to be less frequent in Roman temples not devoted to Mithras compared to *mithraea*[69]. Examples are provided by the excavations at Elst (the Netherlands)[70], Empel (the Netherlands)[71], La Bauve à Meaux (France)[72], Jouars-Pontchartrain (France)[73], Harlow (UK)[74] and Great Chesterford (UK)[75], although less detailed recovery methods could in some cases also have been responsible for a low frequency of bird remains. In contrast, there are also examples of Roman temples not devoted to Mithras, where chicken remains were certainly not rare. At the temple at Karden (Germany), possibly devoted to Vulcanus, there was a 'relatively high frequency of domestic fowl remains'[76]. At the sanctuary of Mercurius at Uley (UK) chicken remains again formed significant numbers[77]. Chicken bones sometimes even represent conspicuous finds at Roman temples not devoted to Mithras. An example is provided by a context of burned chicken bones found at the Fortuna temple at Nijmegen (the Netherlands) (n= 662, MNI= 16)[78]. Another example is provided by the burned domestic fowl and songbird bones filling almost exclusively offering pits at the temple of Isis and Magna Mater at Mainz (Germany). At the same site, concentrations of chicken and goose bones (unburnt) were also found. A third type of context of animal remains from the same site is formed by 'normal' consumption refuse, amongst which the skull, mandible and distal leg bones of chicken are frequent[79] (is this the slaughtering offal connected with the other two types of contexts?). It can be concluded that, except for some examples, chicken bones do not generally dominate the finds assemblages of Roman (non-mithraic) temples.

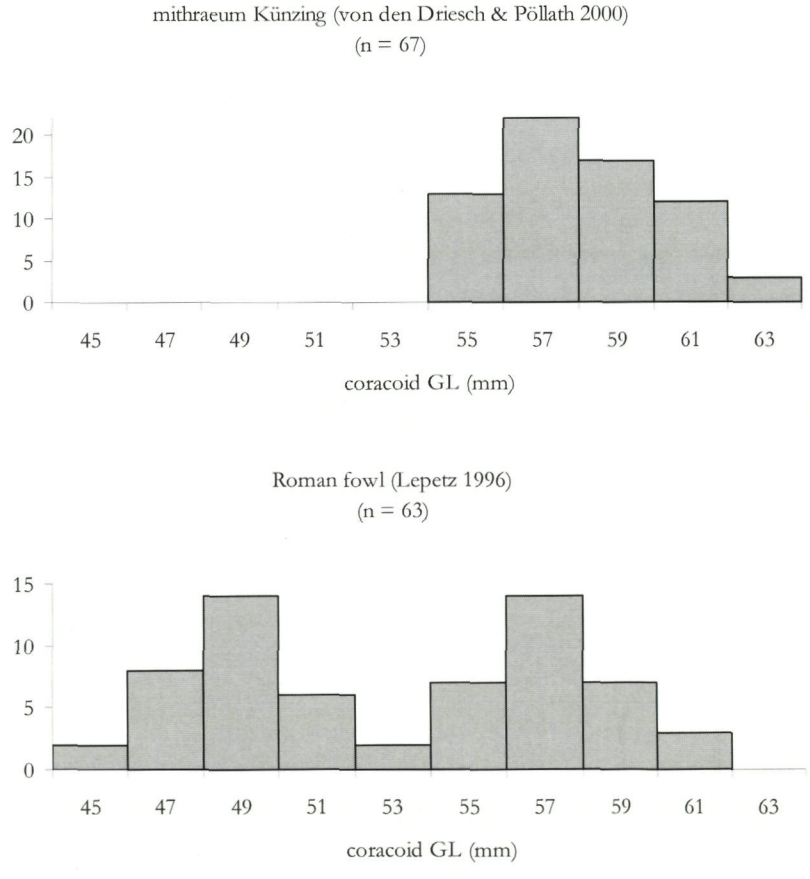
58 De Grossi Mazzorin, this volume.
59 Olive, this volume.
60 Olive, this volume.
61 Macready & Sidell 1998, 213.
62 Gaidon-Bunuel 2002.
63 Rageth in press, cited by von den Driesch & Pöllath 2000.
64 Adam *et al.* 1996, cited by von den Driesch & Pöllath 2000.
65 Vörös 1991, cited by von den Driesch & Pöllath 2000.
66 See, e.g., the 'second' mithraeum at Heidelberg (Germany) (Hensen, this volume), Wiesloch (Germany) (Hensen 1994), and other examples mentioned further.
67 Lepetz 1996, 15-28.
68 Jacques *et al.* 2002.
69 Nickel 1999.
70 Lauwerier 1988.
71 Seijnen 1994.
72 Magnan & Lepetz 2002.
73 Blin & Lepetz 2002.
74 Legge *et al.* 2000.
75 Legge *et al.* 2000.
76 Benecke 1999.
77 Levitan 1993.
78 Zeiler 1996, 1997.
79 Witteyer & Hochmuth 2002.

Many of the studies of animal remains from *mithraea* mentioned above only deal with consumption leftovers as a whole, without detailed analysis per contextual unit. However, some reports mention special contexts in which domestic fowl certainly must have played a ritual role. At the Walbrook *mithraeum* at London, chicken bones were found in concentrations within the floor fillings[80]. There was also a collection of charred bones, including those of domestic fowl, found within a pot set beside an altar. Unfortunately, this assemblage was lost prior to detailed examination[81]. In the *mithraeum* at Carrawburgh (UK), chicken bones were found within the layers of heather covering the floor[82]. Chicken and goose bones were also found in the wattle-revetments of the benches of the temple[83], and the skull of a chicken was excavated from a deposit below the altar[84]. A recent review gives some more examples from Germany[85]. A cistern within the *mithraeum* of Nida-Heddernheim contained the remains of a cock, amongst other bird bones[86]. In a cavity in the walls of a later phase of the same temple bones of 'domestic birds' and 'ruminants' were found[87]. In the *mithraeum* at Trier-Altbachtal a ritual pit was excavated, with a burnt layer, 'bird bones' and coins[88]. At the *mithraeum* of Mundelsheim ceramic vessels were dug into the ground containing fragments of a cattle skull, and the bones of a piglet and a cock[89]. Similar deposits were found at the *mithraea* of Dieburg[90], Stockstadt[91] and Martigny (Switzerland)[92]. Vermaseren mentions the presence of chicken remains at the *mithraea* of Pons Saravi (France), Köningshöffen (Germany), Schachadorf (Austria), Carnuntum (Austria) and Sarmizegetusa (Romania)[93] but it is not clear whether these finds represent special deposits or consumption refuse. Nevertheless, it seems to be a pattern that special deposits including the remains of domestic fowl occur at *mithraea*. This, however, is again not an exclusive trait of the Mithras temples. At Wavendon Gate, Milton Keynes (UK), for example, the remains of a cockerel were found beneath a jar, close to a cult object (a so-called solar or Taranis wheel), clearly in a non-mithraic context[94].

There is yet another, even more convincing argument to accept that the abundance of domestic fowl at the *mithraeum* at Tienen cannot be explained by gastronomy alone, *i.e.* the fact that only male animals were present in the slaughtered population. Whether this was also the case in other *mithraea* is difficult to assess since information about sex ratios is often not available from the archaeozoological reports. An example can be found in the bone report from Künzing, although for that site sex estimations could still be made because the measurements of the domestic fowl remains were fully published. After comparing the measurements from Künzing[95] with those from Tienen and from northern France, it becomes clear that all chickens slaughtered at the former site were probably male (fig. 8)! At the Crypta Balbi *mithraeum* at Rome, two chickens from depositional layers associated with the temple were male while the sex of a third could not be firmly established[96]. When the measurements of the greatest lengths of the chicken bones from these layers[97] are compared with the material from Tienen, it can be demonstrated that 5 out of 7 completely preserved bones were from males. Of the other two, one bone shows a greatest length with a value falling between the distributions for males and females, and another was most probably female. Quite remarkably, the domestic fowl remains from a layer deposited after or during the destruction of the *mithraeum* came from both male and female individuals, in almost equal numbers[98]. Furthermore, of the 13 tarsometatarsi recovered at the *mithraeum* of London, 11 could be sexed and they all proved to be male[99]. Amongst the chicken bones found in the wattle revetments of the benches of the *mithraeum* at Carrawburgh (UK), tarsometatarsi were identified bearing large spurs. The presence of female birds was not discussed, and perhaps even not attested[100]. The chicken bones from the *mithraeum* of Septeuil (France) represent *'principalement des sujets mâles'*[101]. From the data on the tarsometatarsi published[102], it can be calculated that at

[80] Macready & Sidell 1998, 208.
[81] Macready & Sidell 1998, 209.
[82] Richmond & Gillam 1951, 16.
[83] Platt 1951a.
[84] Platt 1951b.
[85] Nickel 1999, 168.
[86] Huld-Zetsche 1986, 21.
[87] Huld-Zetsche 1986, 30.
[88] Gose 1972, 110.
[89] Planck 1989, 180.
[90] Behn 1928 cited by Wiblé 1995.
[91] Schleiermacher 1928 cited by Wiblé 1995.
[92] Wiblé 1995.
[93] Gaidon-Bunuel 2002, 76, note 119, table 7, based on Vermaseren 1956, 326; 1960, 138, 155, 213, 298.
[94] Williams *et al.* 1996.
[95] Data taken from von den Driesch & Pöllath 2000.
[96] De Grossi Mazzorin, this volume, table 4, US 72 and 59. The sex estimations are based upon the morphology of the

8 *Comparison of the distribution of the greatest lenght of the coracoid of domestic fowl from the mithraeum at Künzing (data from von den Driesch & Pöllath 2000), with that from Roman fowl from northern France (data compiled by Lepetz 1996) (n: finds numbers).*



least 83% of the individuals were male, while 12% were of unknown sex (MNI=116). Not fitting within this pattern of male dominance, however, are the data from the Swiss *mithraea* of Martigny and Orbe-Boscéaz, where the ratios of male to female birds are 7:4 and 4:6[103]. However, it is not clear upon which criteria these sex estimations are based.

It must now be questioned whether the deliberate choice of male domestic fowl was an exclusive characteristic of the animal remains from *mithraea*. Data must be taken into account from temples not devoted to Mithras, but with a high frequency of chicken remains amongst their consumption waste. At the temple of Karden (Germany), probably devoted to Vulcanus, young cockerels and hens were found amongst the domestic fowl remains, an observation based upon osteometrical analysis[104]. At the Gallo-Roman sanctuary of Halatte (France) (not a *mithraeum*) 90% of the chicken remains were from females[105]. At the sanctuary of La Bauve à Meaux (France) chickens were found rarely (7% of the identified remains, n= 35000) and the remains consisted mainly of chicks and young hens[106]. However, based on the presence or absence of a spur on the tarsometatarsus, the domestic fowl remains from the Fortuna temple at Nijmegen (the Netherlands) were estimated to be derived from at least 8 cocks and 1 hen, while it remained possible that all individuals were male (see the discussion about the absence of a spur in young males earlier)[107]. At Beaumont-sur-Oise (France), within the context of a Roman small town, from a 4th-century bone deposit 48% of the remains represented domestic fowl (total number of identified finds=2397). Within this chicken population virtually all animals were male! Most probably this context represents a deposit with a 'special', perhaps ritual nature, since it was excavated from a small room within a house, and comprises the leftovers of a single meal[108]. Without a better knowledge of the ideological context of these finds from Beaumont they cannot be used without caution. Perhaps we are dealing here with a religious context?

Apparently, a dominance of fowl, and even of cocks, is a pattern typical (although not exclusive) for *mithraea*. Still, gastronomy cannot be the reason why this relationship between Mithras and the cock existed. Otherwise, female domestic fowl would also be found at *mithraea* and chickens would have been abundant in all Roman temples. The link between the cock and the cult of Mithras must thus be a symbolic one. The presence of domestic fowl bones in 'special' deposits within *mithraea* is a corroboration for this hypothesis.

7 The symbolic meaning of the cock, and other animals

The question now is whether the archaeological data can shed light upon the symbolic meaning of the cock within the Mithras cult. Of course, the main problem associated with such an interpretation is the lack of direct historical data on the cult, and the conflicting theories about the Mithras myth[109]. Following Ulansey[110], the Mithras religion is built within a cosmological framework, explaining why the animals and figures represented in the *tauroctony* must be regarded as symbols for the constellations. These animals, being part of the myth, could thus also have played a role in the cult. The cock, however, is mostly not represented on the main bull-killing scene. Two other figures, depicted at the sides of the *tauroctony*, are sub-deities of the Mithras myth, *i.e.* Cautes, holding a torch upright, and his counterpart, Cautopates, holding its torch downwards. The first figure represents the rising sun[111], while the second symbolises sunset[112]. Alternatively, they could represent the growth season (spring), and autumn[113]. It is important that, in some representations, the cock is associated with Cautes[114]. It has been argued that on the famous brooch found in Ostia, and now in the Ashmolean Museum, the cock replaces the figure of Cautes[115]. A connection between the cock and the cult can thus be found in the fact that the cock is the animal that announces the rising of the sun with its crow. Most interestingly, there exists a representation of Cautes and Cautopates where the torches of both figures are replaced by birds[116] (cocks?).

Generally, the importance of the sun within the cosmological framework of the Mithras doctrine is clear. Indeed, within the myth, there is a close association between Mithras and the Sun god, reflected in the cult by the two highest initiation grades, *i.e.* of the Father (substituting Mithras) and of the *Heliodromus* or Sun-runner (representing the Sun), and by the mythical story of the dinner between both figures. Mithras is the superior of the Sun, becoming the *Sol Invictus*. According to Merkelbach, the cock is one of the symbols of the sixth initiation grade, which is the *Heliodromus*[117].

A further corroboration for the association between the cock and the rising sun can be found in the timing of the Tienen feast, *i.e.* June or July. It is possible that the banquet was held at the summer solstice, which in the northern hemisphere occurs on June 21 or 22 and is characterised by the occurrence of the longest day of the year. According to recent studies, both the winter and summer solstices (shortest and longest days) were very important within the liturgical year of the Mithras religion, being connected with the concepts of mortality and immortality, with the descent and ascent of the souls[118]. One text describes the gathering of the Mithraists at Virunum, on the 26th of June[119]. Is it not probable that the announcement of the longest day made the cock such an important animal for a feast at that time of the year? Unfortunately, for the other *mithraea* from which animal remains have been studied, the timing of the ritual deposits could not be reconstructed. In fact, such a chronological reconstruction is rarely possible on the basis of archaeozoological

tarsometatarsus. Possibly the 'female?' individual was a young male.

97 Data not included in de Grossi Mazzorin (this volume) but communicated personally.

98 De Grossi Mazzorin, this volume, table 4, US 54. The sex estimations are based upon the morphology of the tarsometatarsus and must thus be taken with caution.

99 Macready & Sidell 1998, 213.

100 Platt 1951a.

101 Gaidon-Bunuel 2002.

102 Gaidon-Bunuel 2002, table 5.

103 Olive, this volume.

104 Benecke 1999.

105 Lepetz 2000, 200.

106 Magnan & Lepetz 2002.

107 Zeiler 1997, 105.

108 Lepetz 1996, 21 & 130-131.

109 'Cult' being the term describing the rituals performed by the worshippers, 'myth' being the story of the god (see Beck 2000).

110 Ulansey 1989, 1998.

111 For Cautes see Vermaseren 1956, 196, 202, fig. 135 and Merkelbach 1984, 285, both cited by Gaidon-Bunuel 2002, 77, note 131.

112 On the iconography of the torchbearers: Beck 2000, 157, note 54 and the references cited there.

113 Ulansey 1998, 57-60.

114 See a fresco in the *mithraeum* at Sancta Maria Capua Vetere (Merkelbach 1984, 122, 285, fig. 26).

115 Merkelbach 1984, 122, 295, fig. 39, but see also Weiss, this volume.

116 Beck 2000, 157, note 55.

117 Merkelbach 1984, 85.

118 Beck 2000, 145, note 2.

119 Beck 1998.

material. Two other examples are provided by the Romano-British temple at Harlow (UK) where mainly young sheep were sacrificed, during autumn[120], and by the temple at Great Chesterford (UK) where there was also a clear dominance of sheep amongst the animals used for ritual purposes, and where slaughtering took place both during spring and autumn[121]. These two temples (not devoted to Mithras) thus also show seasonal slaughtering, but not during the same period of the year as in Tienen's *mithraeum*.

Rare historical evidence underlining the special place of the cock within the religion of Mithras can be found in eastern sources, although it must be stressed that the eastern religion involving Mithras differs significantly from the west-Roman religion discussed here. Nevertheless, the Zend-Avesta prescribes offerings of fowl to Mithras and the accounts of the temple at Dura Europos mention the purchase of fowl for the preparation of the ritual banquets[122]. The classical author Ambrosiaster reports that, during one of the initiation rites, "others [...], their hands bound with chicken guts, are propelled over trenches filled with water; then comes someone with a sword and severs the guts"[123]. Why precisely chicken guts were chosen (and whether these came from male or female individuals) is not clear but perhaps this again underlines the special position of the cock within the Mithras cult. Ambrosiaster's description points to an important problem within the interpretations, *i.e.* that it is possible, even not unlikely, that completely unknown ritual acts were performed in which domestic fowl played a significant role. In fact, the only known iconographical reference to the use of cocks within the cult comes from the *mithraeum* under the Sancta Prisca in Rome, where a fresco depicts a procession of men, one holding a cock[124].

Another unsolved theme is the confrontation between the speculated special status of the cock within the Mithras cult and the symbolic meaning of this animal in other Roman religions. It is known, for example, that the cock and the male goat were companions of Mercurius[125]. This is for example illustrated by the excavation of the temple devoted to a Romano-Celtic representation of Mercurius at Uley (UK), where goats were more numerous than sheep, and where domestic fowl were abundant[126]. Furthermore, cocks, but also hens, were animals typically sacrificed for Aesculapus[127]. Whether, on the basis of the abundance of chicken remains at Karden (Germany)[128], a link must be made between domestic fowl and Vulcanus, is not clear. The same is true for a possible link between the cock and Fortuna, based upon the finds at Nijmegen (The Netherlands)[129]. Generally, the cock seems to have been regarded as one of the supreme animals in religious practices (see for example Plinius the Elder[130]). The bird even must have had a special status in Celtic cults surviving into Roman times, illustrated, for example, by the cockerel found in connection with a solar or Taranis wheel at Wavendon Gate (UK)[131]. These observations could contradict the hypothesis of a special place for the cock within the Mithras cult. However, the evidence from the special deposits within the *mithraea* and the complete absence of hens in contexts such as the one excavated at Tienen, still suggests that the cock was more special within the context of Mithras than it was within the religion of other gods.

The suggested symbolic meaning of the cock necessitates a reconsideration of the other species represented within the pit. The dog, referring to the constellation of Canis Minor[132], is also typically depicted on the *tauroctony* but the remains from this species found at Tienen most probably are reworked bones buried in the ground in which the pit had been dug[133]. However, the jackdaw, being a black bird, represents another case. The raven, referring to the stellar constellation of Corvus[134], figures in the Mithraic bull-killing scene, is the symbol for one of the initiation stages, and plays a part in a catasterism myth about drought and water, in which Apollo (the sun god), Corvus, Crater and Hydra play a role[135]. Could it be that the jackdaw found at Tienen's *mithraeum* served as an *Ersatz* for the raven? In any case, there are comparable finds from other *mithraea*. Within the *mithraeum* at Wiesloch the bones of a raven (*Corvus corax*) were found under the sherds of an oil amphora[136]. A raven bone was also found at the *mithraeum* of London[137], while remains of a carrion crow (*Corvus corone*) were found at Martigny[138]. However, crow (*Corvus corone*) and jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*) bones were also found within the Hercules temple at Empel (The Netherlands)[139], and bones from the crow or the rook (*Corvus frugilegus*, another of the Corvidae) were part of the animal remains from the Gallo-Roman sanctuary of Halatte (France)[140]. At Garforth (UK), a Romano-British ritual deposit included the remains of a small dog, a piglet and a goat, and also a partial raven skeleton[141]. Seijnen mentions that bones from the crow are regularly found at Roman cult places but gives no further references to support this statement[142].

A further intriguing find from the *mithraeum* at Tienen is formed by the remains of two large eels. On the *tauroctony*, a snake is depicted which refers to the constellation of Hydra. Hydra, however, is the water snake, an animal thus easily replaced by an eel, especially in a part of the world where water snakes are not present, and where taxonomical biological knowledge had not yet reached its present standards. The symbolic meaning of the eels within the context from Tienen is perhaps further corroborated by the fact that large freshwater fish are rarely documented from Gallo-Roman sites in Flanders (Belgium)[143], suggesting that these fish may have been gastronomically uninteresting for the people of that time and must thus have been present at the banquet for other reasons. It must furthermore be noted that Hydra plays an impor-

120 Legge *et al.* 2000.
121 Legge *et al.* 2000.
122 Richmond & Gillam 1951, 16, notes 14-16.
123 Beck 2000, 146, note 10.
124 Merkelbach 1984, 310-311, fig. 57.
125 Schindler 1965.
126 Woodward 1992, 79, cited by King 2002.
127 Filtzinger 1980.
128 Benecke 1999.
129 Zeiler 1997, 105.
130 Plinius, *Naturalis Historiae*, book X, cited by Gaidon-Bunuel 2002, 77, note 129.
131 Williams *et al.* 1996.
132 Ulansey 1998, 47.
133 At the 'second' mithraeum at Heidelberg (Germany), dog bones were found amongst a small bone collection (Hensen, this volume) but the taphonomic status of these finds is uncertain.
134 Ulansey 1998, 47.
135 Beck 2000, 153, note 36.
136 Hensen 1992, 1997, cited by von den Driesch & Pöllath 2000, 153.
137 Macready & Sidell 1998, 214.
138 Olive, this volume.
139 Seijnen 1994.
140 Lepetz 2000.
141 Jaques 2000.
142 Seijnen 1994.
143 Van Neer & Ervynck 1994.

tant role in the myth in which Apollo, Corvus and Crater also figure (see above)[144].

It also seems to be a characteristic of *mithraea* from which material has been subjected to an archaeozoological study, that the slaughter ages of the animals eaten within the temple were very young. This was certainly the case at Tienen, at Carrawburgh (UK) [145], at Künzing (Germany[146], at Zillis (Switzerland)[147] and at the *mithraeum* in the army camp of Aquincum (Hungary)[148]. At the two Swiss sites of Martigny and Orbe-Boscéaz, it has been demonstrated that slaughter ages were considerably younger in the *mithraea* than outside of them[149]. However, these young slaughter ages do not seem to be an exclusive trait of the temples for Mithras. The remains of young animals are generally found in all Roman temples[150].

Finally, the *mithraeum* at Tienen has not yielded any evidence for the real killing of a bull near or within the temple complex. This observation matches with what has been found in all other *mithraea* from which the animal remains have been studied[151].

8 Conclusion

It can be safely concluded that the analysis of the animal remains from the ritual deposit near the *mithraeum* at Tienen has revealed information about the Mithras cult. The consumption leftovers illustrate a banquet during which ingredients of high gastronomic quality were served. However, the selection of the animals killed for the festivities most probably also reflects the symbolic meaning of certain species within the Mithras cult. This is certainly the case for the cock, announcer of the Sun, probably also for the jackdaw (Corvus) and perhaps also for the eel (Hydra). On the basis of the slaughtering ages of the mammals consumed, the banquet most probably was held at the event of the summer solstice, a moment within the year characterised by the longest day, thus further underlining the symbolic role of the cock.

The comparison of the analysis of the animal remains from the *mithraeum* at Tienen with that of other archaeozoological assemblages from *mithraea* in different parts of the western Roman empire, has clearly shown that the characteristics of the Tienen's *mithraeum* fit into a more global pattern, being an essential part of the Mithras religion. However, the analysis of animal remains from excavated *mithraea* has certainly not yet reached its full potential. While such finds were formerly often not recovered or studied, and only figured as anecdotal mentionings in publications, it is now realised that they are not only of interest to archaeozoologists but can also help to reveal what was happening within the Mithras cult[152]. However, an in-depth analysis of the place of animals within the religion can only be made when historians start to take into account fully the data from the archaeozoological analyses, which could eventually lead to a review of the ritual role of certain animals within the Mithras cult and myth.

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APPENDIX

The animal remains from features related to the *mithraeum* pit

An inventory of the animal remains from the other, smaller pits near the *mithraeum* (see introduction), is represented in table 7. The species composition is the same as that from the large pit, except for the partial horse skeleton in one of the smaller structures. The meaning of this find is not clear because it cannot be excluded that, during the digging of the pit, a buried skeleton was partially disturbed. It was noted that the horse bones showed a worse preservation condition compared to the other finds from the pits. Moreover, horses do not play a role within the Mithras myth and are not reported to have figured in the cult. There is a find of horse bones reported from the *mithraeum* at Wiesloch (Germany)[153], but the nature of the context is rather unclear.

The analysis of the age structure and osteometry of the domestic fowl from the smaller pits is identical to that of the material studied earlier. The same is true for the slaughtering ages observed from the pig and sheep remains. The cattle remains again do not represent complete skeletons. Generally, the hypothesis based on the analysis of the ceramics that the smaller pits were filled at the same time, and with the same material, as the large pit, is thus confirmed by the characteristics of the animal remains.

144 Beck 2000, 153, note 36.
145 Richmond & Gillam 1951, 12, 21, 24; Fraser 1951.
146 von den Driesch & Pöllath 2000.
147 Rageth in press, cited by von den Driesch & Pöllath 2000.
148 Vörös 1991, cited by Olive, this volume.
149 Olive, this volume.
150 Nickel 1999, 168-169.
151 See the references made earlier.
152 von den Driesch & Pöllath 2000, 153.
153 Hensen 1994.

Table 7
Species composition of the animal remains from a number of smaller pits excavated near the *mithraeum*. Represented are the finds numbers based on a dry-sieving (5 mm) recovery technique.

Feature	101	111	112	126	total
unidentified amphibians (Amphibia indet.)	-	-	15	-	15
greylag or domestic goose (*Anser anser* f. domestica?)	5	-	2	-	7
woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*)	-	-	1	-	1
domestic fowl (*Gallus gallus* f. domestica)	783	-	522	2	1307
unidentified birds (Aves indet.)	101	-	-	1	102
unidentified insectivores (Insectivora sp.)	-	-	1	-	1
unidentified rodents (Rodentia sp.)	5	-	3	-	8
hare (*Lepus europaeus*)	1	-	-	-	1
dog (*Canis lupus* f. familiaris)	4	-	-	-	4
horse (*Equus ferus* f. caballus)	1	43	-	-	44
pig (*Sus scrofa* f. domestica)	74	3	18	-	95
cattle (*Bos primigenius* f. taurus)	57	-	21	-	78
sheep or goat (*Ovis ammon* f. aries/ *Capra aegagrus* f. hircus)	43	-	-	-	43
vertebrae, large mammals	8	-	-	-	8
vertebrae, small to medium mammals	9	-	18	-	27
costae, large mammals	22	-	1	-	23
costae, small to medium mammals	84	-	14	-	98
unidentified remains	1288	300	530	10	2128
total	2485	346	1146	13	3990

SAMENVATTING

De symboliek van de haan. Dierenresten uit het *mithraeum* te Tienen (België)

Het onderzoek van de dierlijke resten uit een rituele depositie opgegraven nabij het *mithraeum* te Tienen heeft belangrijke informatie opgeleverd over de Mithras-cultus. Het consumptieafval blijkt de weerslag te zijn van een feestmaaltijd waarbij voedingswaren met hoge gastronomische waarde werden opgediend. De selectie van de dierlijke producten kwam echter niet enkel tot stand op basis van hun culinaire appreciatie; ze weerspiegelt ook de symbolische betekenis van bepaalde soorten binnen de Mithras-cultus. Dit is zeker het geval voor de haan, die met zijn gekraai de komst van de Zon aankondigt, maar wellicht ook voor de kauw (die kan geïdentificeerd worden met het sterrenbeeld Corvus) en de paling (die stond voor Hydra). Op basis van een nauwkeurige reconstructie van de slachtleeftijden van de gedomesticeerde zoogdieren kan vooropgesteld worden dat de rituele feestmaaltijd georganiseerd werd naar aanleiding van de zomerzonnewende, het moment in het jaar waarop de dag het langst is, en de nacht het kortst. Dit gegeven kan weer in verbinding worden gebracht met de symboliek van de haan, de aankondiger van de dag.

Een vergelijking van het ensemble van dierenresten uit het Tiense *mithraeum* met deze uit andere *mithraea* binnen het Romeinse rijk toont duidelijk aan dat de conclusies gebaseerd op het Tiense materiaal passen in een meer globaal patroon dat een essentieel deel uitmaakt van de Mithras-godsdienst. Desalniettemin heeft het onderzoek van dierenresten uit opgegraven *mithraea* nog niet zijn volle potentieel bereikt. Terwijl dit vondstenmateriaal vroeger vaak niet eens werd ingezameld, laat staan bestudeerd, groeit nu het inzicht dat het onderzoek ervan niet enkel relevant is voor archeozoölogen maar ook kan bijdragen tot de algemene kennis van wat er zich binnen de Mithras-cultus afspeelde. Een grondige evaluatie van de rol van bepaalde dieren binnen de religie zal echter enkel kunnen worden gemaakt wanneer het historisch onderzoek de archeozoölogische data volledig integreert.

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Das *Mithraeum* von Bornheim-Sechtem bei Bonn: Baubefunde und Fundumstände[1]

Cornelius ULBERT

Im Zuge einer bauvorgreifenden Rettungsmaßnahme in einem Neubaugebiet in Bornheim-Sechtem wurden Ende 1998 und Anfang 1999 Reste einer römischen Besiedlung vom Ende des ersten Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende des 4. Jh. aufgedeckt[2]. Zur großen Überraschung befand sich darunter auch ein Mithrastempel.

Sechtem liegt linksrheinisch in der Köln-Bonner Bucht, etwa in der Mitte zwischen Rhein und Vorgebirge, Köln und Bonn (Abb. 1) am Zusammenfluss dreier, vom Vorgebirge (Ville) kommender Bachläufe.

Vor der Grabung waren in Sechtem zwar immer wieder sporadisch römische Funde und Befunde ans Licht gekommen[3], die jedoch keinen Hinweis über den Charakter der römischen Besiedlung erbrachten. Allerdings fielen der Ort und seine nähere Umgebung durch eine Häufung von Merkurweihungen auf, die schon zu Beginn des letzten Jahrhunderts dort ein Merkurheiligtum vermuten ließ[4].

Ob durch Sechtem die bekannte römische Fernstraße Euskirchen (*belgica vicus*) – Wesseling verlief, wird vermutet[5]. In der am nächsten gelegenen bekannten römischen Siedlung Wesseling, ca. 5km östlich von Sechtem am Rhein gelegen, mündet die Fernstraße in die entlang des Rheins verlaufende Limesstraße Mainz-Bonn-Köln[6].

Bei der Grabung, die sich auf die vorgegebenen Baugruben und einige Versorgungsstraßen beschränken musste und daher keine zusammenhängende Fläche bildet, wurden neben üblichen römischen Siedlungsbefunden auch ein Gräberfeld und einige schlecht erhaltene Mauerstickungen dokumentiert. Letztere lassen sich vielleicht zum Hauptgebäude einer etwa 50 m breiten Risalitvilla rekonstruieren (Abb. 2). Reste einer Hypokaustanlage an einer Ecke des Gebäudes unterstützen diese Interpretation. Allerdings soll nicht verschwiegen werden, dass die Fundamente durch die eingeschränkte, nur ausschnitthafte Aufdeckung einerseits, andererseits durch moderne Störungen (Bombenkrater) sehr lückenhaft sind; eine andere Interpretation wäre durchaus möglich.

Aufgrund der beschriebenen schlechten Erhaltung sind die Gebäudereste schwer zu deuten und zu datieren. Sicher ist, dass sie an mehreren Stellen Gruben mit Keramik aus dem 2./3. Jh. überlagern. Die obersten Einfüllungen einiger dieser Gruben bestanden aus Brandschutt, was auf einen im übrigen Gelände erodierten oder verpflügten Zerstörungshorizont hindeutet.

Neben mehreren relativ weit streuenden Brandgräbern aus dem 1. bis 3. Jh. konnte ca. 50 m südöstlich des Gebäudekomplexes eine kleine Skelett-

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[1] Dieser Aufsatz ist die ausgearbeitete Fassung des Kongressvortrages von Verfasser und Ch. Wulfmeier. Aus organisatorischen Gründen wurden Baubefunde und Besprechung der wichtigsten Funde in getrennten Aufsätzen behandelt (s. Wulfmeier in diesem Band). An dieser Stelle möchte ich besonders den Organisatoren des Kongresses, insbesondere M. Martens, für die Möglichkeit der Teilnahme an diesem Kongress und die Gastfreundschaft in Tienen/Belgien danken. Dank für wertvolle Hinweise und Anregungen den Mithraskult und Einzelfunde betreffend gilt auch I. Huld-Zetsche (Frankfurt), G. Bauchhenss (Bonn), M. Gechter (Bonn), A. Hensen (Heidelberg), J. Rageth (Chur), U. Sobottka-Braun (Bonn) und N. Birkle (Frankfurt), D. Meyer-Wefering (Bonn), V. Schulz (Brühl).

[2] Ausführende Grabungsfirma war Van de Graaf Archäologie unter der Grabungsleitung von Verfasser. Herrn W. Van de Graaf sei für die Bereitstellung der Grabungsfotos gedankt

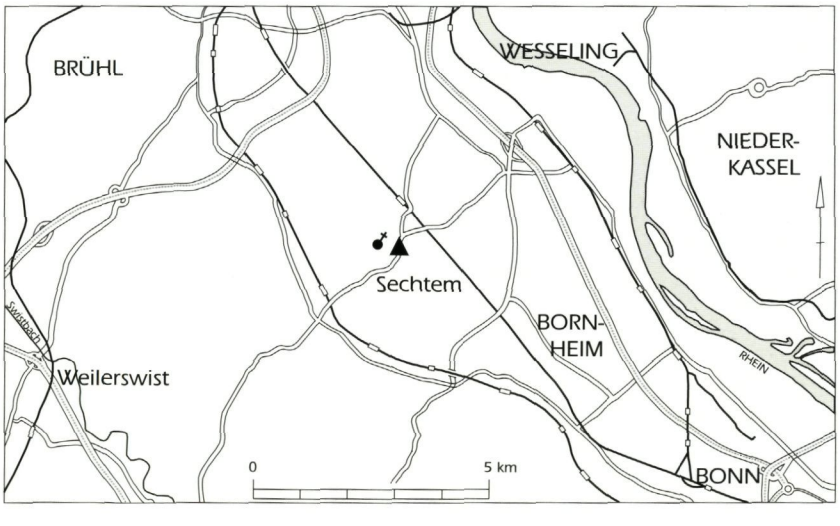
[3] E. Hoven, Mitarbeiter der Grabung, hat diese Funde und Befunde in einer unpublizierten Magisterarbeit an der Universität Nijmegen zusammengestellt.

[4] Oxé 1902; Bauchhenss 1988a und 1988b; Yeo & Bauchhenss 1990.

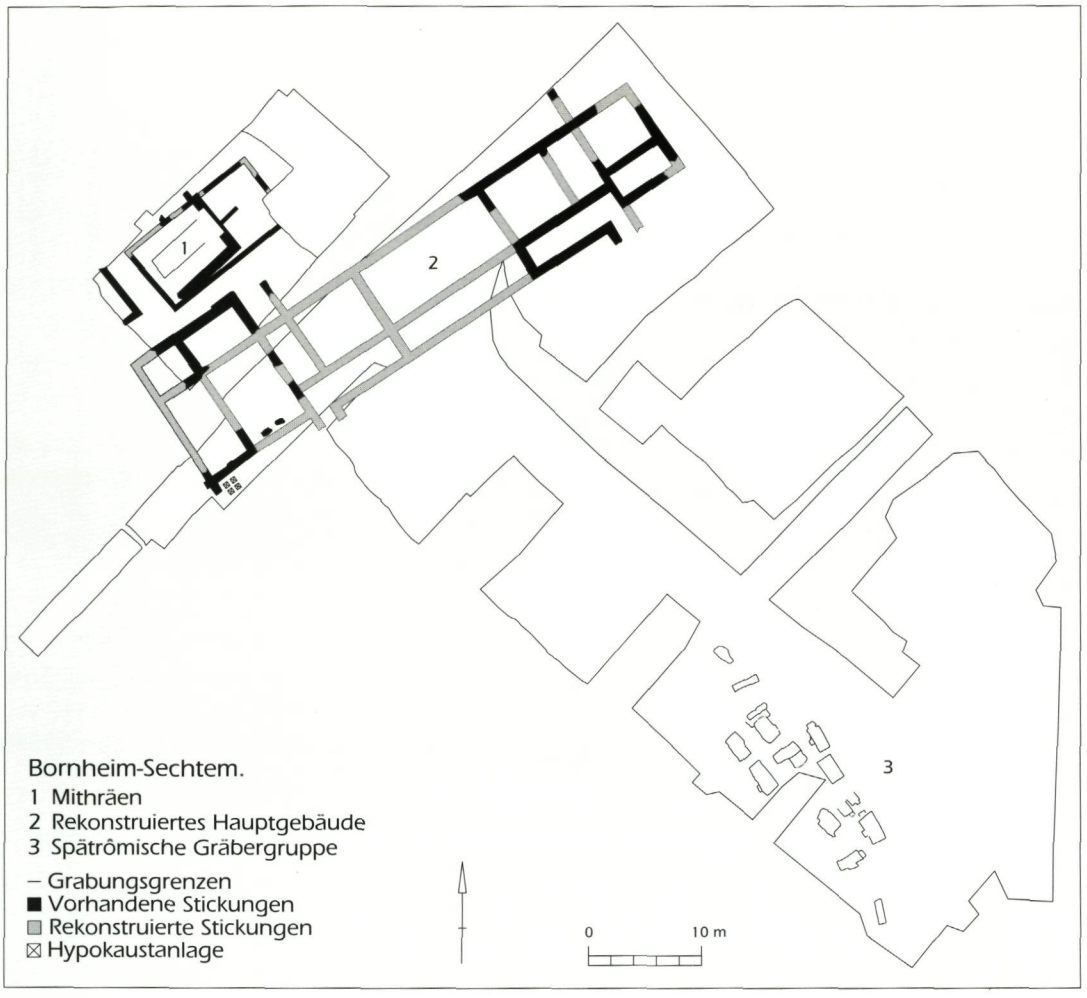
[5] Maassen 1882; Veith 1885.

[6] Wagner 1988; Horn 1987.

1 *Bornheim-Sechtem. Lage des Fundortes in der Köln-Bonner Bucht. (© Geobasisdaten: Landesvermessungsamt NRW, Bonn, 1169/2002).*



2 *Bornheim-Sechtem. Rekonstruktion des Hauptgebäudes, Lage des Mithraeums und der spätrömischen Gräber.*



gräbergruppe aufgedeckt werden (Abb. 2). Trotz der ungewöhnlichen Nähe und keiner erkennbaren Abgrenzung, kann man m.E. aufgrund der Lage und Orientierung einen Bezug des offensichtlich geplant angelegten Gräberfeldes zum vermuteten Hauptgebäude erkennen. Auch die Zusammensetzung – Männer-, Frauen- und Kindergräber – spricht dafür, dass es sich um Zivilpersonen handelt.

Den z.T. überdurchschnittlich reich ausgestatteten Bestattungen waren zahlreiche Münzen beigegeben, die fast ausnahmslos aus der 1. Hälfte des 4. Jh. stammen. Einige beigabenlose Gräber mit anderer Orientierung, die teilweise die spätantiken Gräber überlagern, sind vermutlich frühmittelalterlich.

Ein Zusammenhang zwischen den Gräbern und den als Hauptgebäude einer *villa* interpretierten Fundamenten wäre also denkbar und böte einen Hinweis auf die zeitliche Einordnung des Gebäudes.

Das *Mithraeum*

Die einleitenden Ausführungen sind insofern für die Interpretation des *Mithraeums* von Bedeutung, als es nur in einem Abstand von 2 m im hinteren Bereich des Hauptgebäudes lag (Abb. 2).

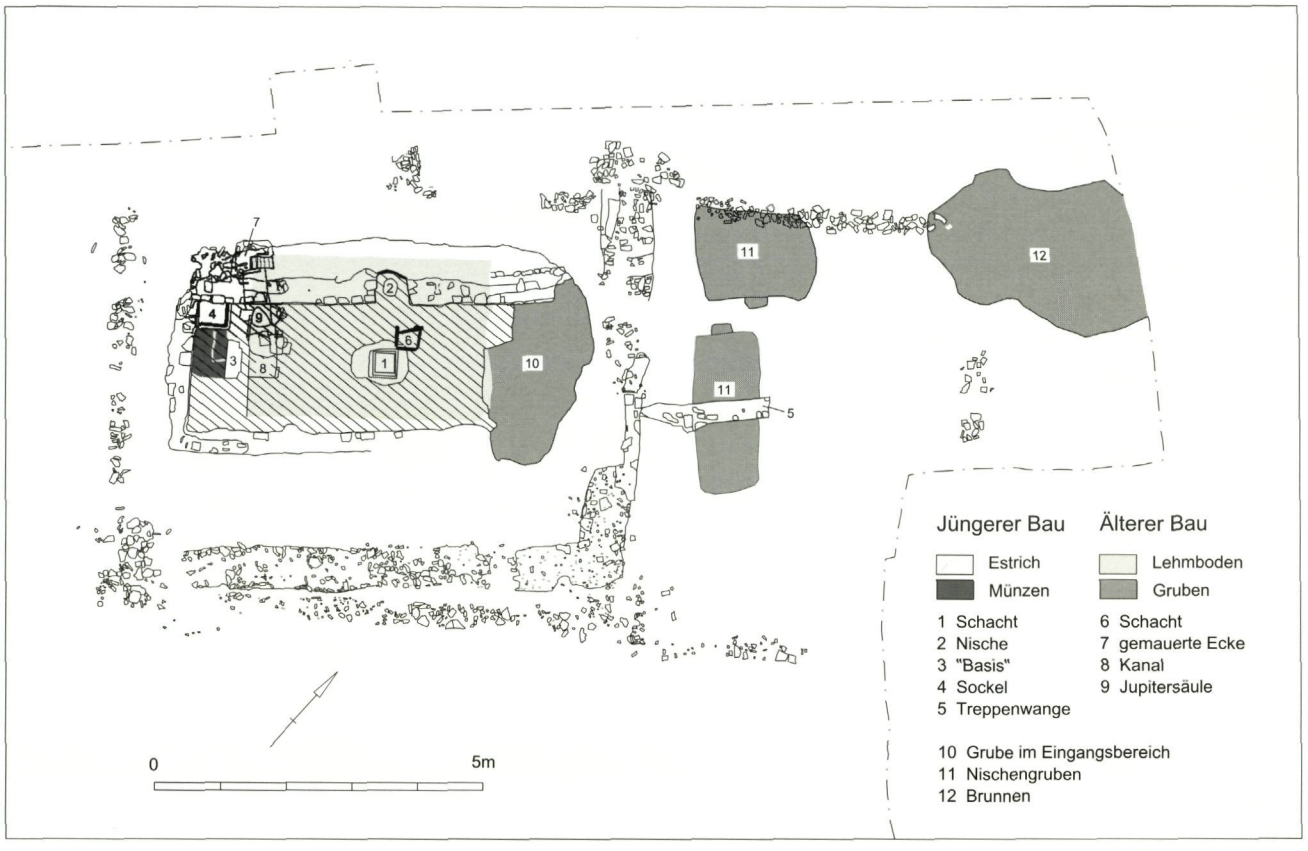
Bei dem insgesamt 13,50 x 6,80m großen Geviert (Abb. 3) lassen sich aufgrund von stratigrafischen Beobachtungen Reste von vermutlich drei zeitlich aufeinanderfolgenden Mithräen oder Bauphasen unterscheiden, die im folgenden einzeln erläutert werden (Abb. 4):

Vom jüngsten Bau (Abb. 4b) stammt im NO und SO das ca. 60 cm breite, massive gemörtelte Steinfundament der *cella*. Die Fundamente der beiden anderen Seiten waren nicht erhalten bzw. konnten nicht mehr dokumentiert werden[7].

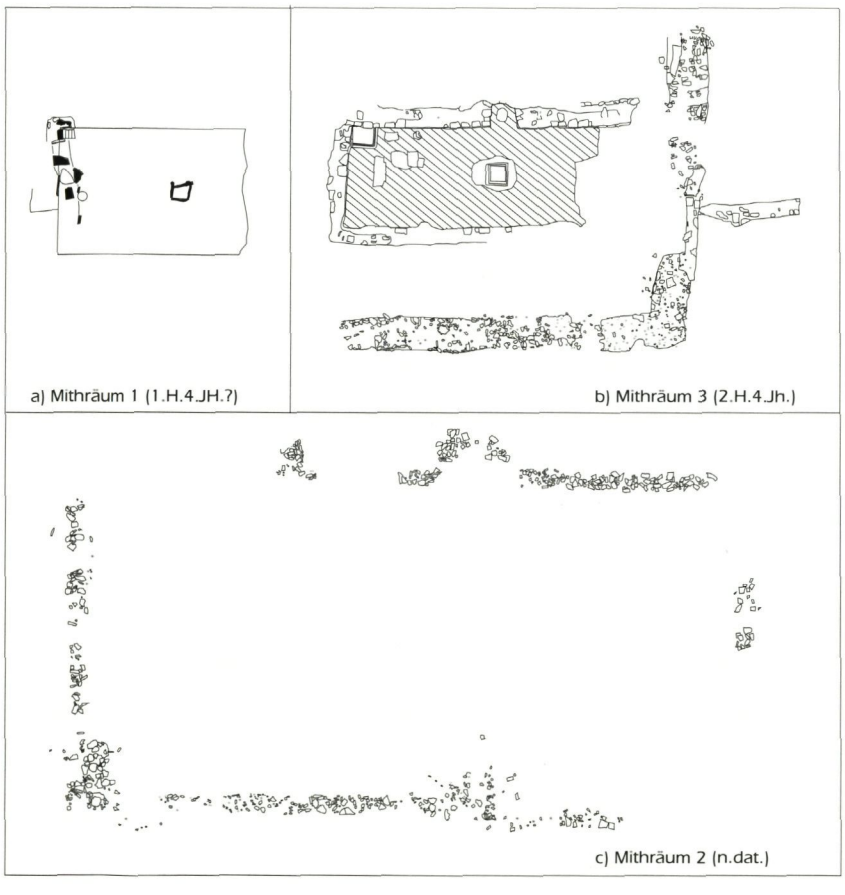
In einem Abstand von etwa 1,70 m zu den Seiten lag etwa 60 cm unter dem Fundament bzw. ca. 1 m unter dem antiken Laufhorizont der ca. 6 x 2 m große, sehr qualitätsvolle Estrichboden des Mittelganges (Abb. 5). An drei Seiten war er von den Blendmauern der Podien und der Stirnseite eingefasst. Die Mauern bestanden aus sorgfältig bearbeiteten und gesetzten Tuffquadern, die bis zu drei Steinlagen hoch erhalten waren. Die Breite der Podien kann aus dem Abstand des Estrichs zum Fundament der *cella* mit etwa 1,70 m

[7] Während der regulären Grabung lag die NW-Seite der *cella* außerhalb der Baugrube. Bei der endgültigen Auskofferung wurde die Baugrube um mehr als 1 m ohne archäologische Beobachtung nach NW erweitert, so dass der Mauerverlauf hier nicht dokumentiert werden konnte.

3 *Bornheim-Sechtem. Gesamtplan des Mithraeums.*



4 *Bornheim-Sechtem. Die einzelnen Bauphasen des Mithraeums.*



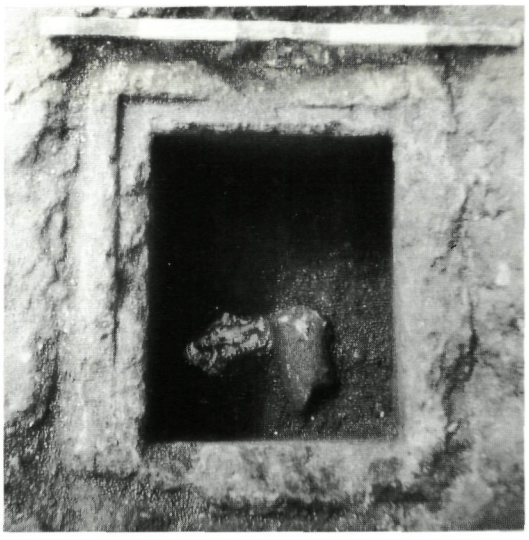
errechnet werden. Hinweise auf eine zentrale Nische an der Stirnseite gab es nicht; möglicherweise waren aber die Mauern nicht hoch genug erhalten, um sie zu erkennen. Die vierte NO-Seite der *cella* und nahezu der gesamte Eingangsbereich waren vermutlich schon antik durch eine Grube (s. Abb. 3: 10) gestört worden. Lediglich von einer Treppenwange konnten Reste dokumentiert werden (Abb. 3: 5). Nordwestlich der Treppe, an der Innenseite des Fundamentes war ein 30 cm breiter Absatz mit einem 60x12 cm langschmalen Abdruck zu erkennen. Dies könnte auf die Standfläche eines flachen Reliefs o.Ä. hindeuten.

Genau im Zentrum des Mittelganges hatte man einen rechteckigen etwa 40x50 cm großen, aus einem Tuffblock gearbeiteten, 50 cm tiefen Schacht mit in den Estrich eingegossen (Abb. 6 und 3: 1). Ein eingearbeiteter Deckelfalz deutet darauf hin, dass man ihn verschließen konnte. Er besaß keinen Boden und es ließen sich auch im anstehenden Löß darunter keinerlei Fortsetzung oder Verfärbungen erkennen, die beispielsweise auf ein Libationsopfer hindeuten würden.

Ebenfalls mit in den Estrich eingegossen war in der W-Ecke des Kultraumes ein rechteckiger, 45x50 cm großer und insgesamt 30 cm hoher Sandsteinsockel (Abb. 5 und 3: 4). Er hatte profilierte Sichtseiten und eine glatte Oberseite ohne erkennbare Einarbeitungen. Spuren eines Gegenstücks in der anderen Ecke gab es nicht.

5 *Bornheim-Sechtem. Estrichboden des Mittelganges von Mithraeum 3 (Foto: Van de Graaf Archäologie 1999).*

6 *Bornheim-Sechtem. Schacht mit Funden in situ im Mittelgang von Mithraeum 3 (Foto: Van de Graaf Archäologie 1999).*



Auf Höhe des Schachtes hatte man in der senkrechten Wand des NW-Podiums eine annähernd quadratische ca. 50x50 cm große Nische ausgespart (Abb. 3: 2). Ihre Rückwand bestand aus drei senkrecht gestellten Ziegelplatten. Diese Nische musste beim Bau der *cella* geplant gewesen sein, da der Estrich auch ihren Boden bildete. Genau in das Zentrum der Nische wurde nachträglich ein 30 cm großes Loch in den Boden geschlagen. Auch hier gab es kein symmetrisches Pendant im gegenüberliegenden Podium.

Bei dem auf der Abbildung 4c dargestellten Fundamenten handelt es sich um ein, an den meisten Stellen nur in geringen Resten (eine Steinlage hoch) erhaltenes Geviert. Im Vergleich zur oben beschriebenen *cella* hatte es eine etwas andere Ausrichtung und wird an der SO- und NW-Seite von den massiveren Fundamenten des jüngeren Kultraumes geschnitten. Dennoch umgab es die jüngere *cella*, reichte aber um etwa 5 m weiter nach NO. Wie aus dem erhaltenen Ansatz einer Unterteilung an der südwestlichen Längsseite ersichtlich war, scheint sich hier eine Aufteilung in Haupt- und Vorraum abzuzeichnen.

Vom einem weiteren Bau (Abb. 4a), dessen Reste unter dem Estrich des jüngeren Baus zum Vorschein kamen, sind ein Boden und Spuren der gemauerten W-Ecke erhalten. Mit Hilfe dieser Ecke und der dokumentierten Profile ließen sich Orientierung und Größe des Bodens ungefähr rekonstruieren. Aufgrund der Lage des eingebauten Schachtes (s.u.) kann man davon ausgehen, dass es ebenfalls der Boden einer *cella* war. Es handelt sich um einen 2,40 m breiten und mindestens 3,60 m langen Lehmboden, dessen Ausdehnung nach NO wegen der Störung durch die Grube im Eingangsbereich nicht ermittelt werden konnte. An der südwestlichen Schmalseite war der Ansatz einer rechteckige Verfärbung im Boden zu erkennen, der von einer zentralen Nische stammen könnte. Davor verlief ein ziegelausgekleideter und -gedeckter Kanal etwa ab der Mitte nach außen. Auffällig war eine mittige Pfostengrube. Zur großen Überraschung fand sich auch in die Mitte des Ganges ein 40x40 cm großer und 26 cm tiefer Schacht (Abb. 7). Seine Wände bestanden aus vier auf die Längsseite gestellte Ziegelplatten. Den Boden bedeckten ebenfalls Ziegelplatten.

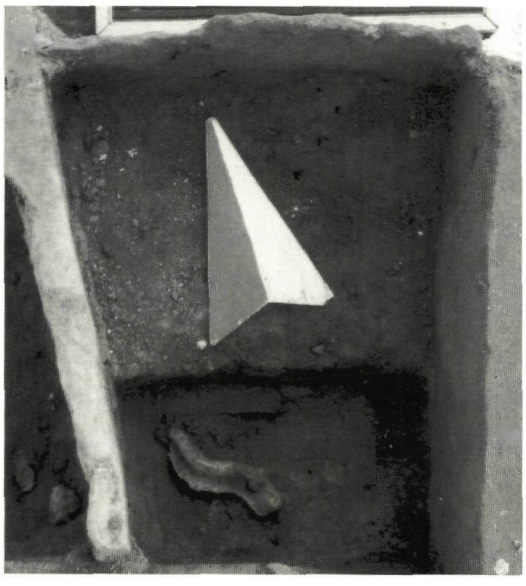
Abschließend noch ein Wort zu der Tiefe der Kulträume. Geht man von der sehr geringen Erhaltung aller im ersten Planum dokumentierten Stickungen aus, kann man abschätzen, dass der antike Laufhorizont mindestens 50 cm höher gelegen haben musste. Der Estrich der *cella* des jüngsten Baus (*Mithraeum* 3) lag 50 cm unter Planum 1, so dass man mit einer Gesamttiefe der *cella* von etwa einem Meter unter dem antiken Niveau rechnen kann. Dies ist immerhin 50 cm tiefer als der Boden der Hypokaustanlage bei dem Hauptgebäude.

Zusammenfassung und Interpretation der Baubefunde

Die in Sechtem aufgedeckten Baubefunde entsprechen den für Mithräen typischen architektonischen Elementen. Sie stammen jedoch aus verschiedenen Bauphasen oder Umbauten.

Ein vertiefter Kultraum mit rekonstruierbaren seitlichen Podien und Reste einer Treppe zum nicht mehr vorhandenen Vorraum stammen vom jüngsten *Mithraeum* 3. Auffällig waren die soliden Fundamente der *cella* im Vergleich zu den anderen Mauerresten. Ob dies auf den wegen der tieferen Gründung besseren Erhaltungszustand zurückzuführen ist, oder als Hinweis auf ein Tonnen-

7 *Bornheim-Sechtem. Schacht mit Funden in situ im Mittelgang von Mithraeum 1 (Foto: Van de Graaf Archäologie).*



gewölbe gewertet werden kann, muss dahingestellt bleiben.

Zum stratigrafisch älteren *Mithraeum* 2 gehören eine Kiesstickung, die die jüngere *cella* umschließt und der aufgrund einer ansatzweise erkennbaren Unterteilung erkennbare Vorraum. Die Lückenhaftigkeit seiner NW-Seite und der Ansatz einer rechtwinklig davon abzweigenden Stickung könnte auf weitere seitliche Räume hindeuten. Möglicherweise handelt es sich dabei um einen die *cella* einschließenden, Über- oder Schutzbau'.

Von dem unter dem Estrich des jüngsten Baus gelegenen *Mithraeum* 1 sind Reste des Bodens und eine gemauerte Fundamentecke erhalten. Aufgrund eines – analog zum jüngeren Bau – in den Boden eingelassenen Schachtes und möglicherweise Spuren einer zentralen Nische kann man davon ausgehen, dass es sich ebenfalls um den Bereich der *cella* handelt. Bemerkenswert ist die Lage des jüngeren Schachtes unmittelbar neben dem älteren (Abb. 8): bei der Neugestaltung des Kultraumes hat man ihn offensichtlich erhalten wollen.

Eine Zusammengehörigkeit der beiden stratigrafisch älteren Befunde (*Mithraeum* 1 und 2) ist aus Symmetriegründen eher unwahrscheinlich.

Die nur in drei Steinlagen erhaltene Innenverkleidung – also bis weit unter den damaligen Laufhorizont –, die zerschlagenen reliefierten Steine auf dem Boden der *cella* (Abb. 5), der Bauschutt aus den Mithräen in dem Brunnen und der Grube deuten nicht nur auf eine ebenerdige Einplanierung, sondern vielmehr auf eine absichtliche gründliche Zerstörung der Bauten hin. Daher ist es sicherlich auch kein Zufall, dass ausgerechnet der Eingangsbereich besonders tief durch eine Grube (Abb. 3: 10) zerstört wurde.

Abschließend sei noch auf einige Befunde im Umfeld der Mithräen hingewiesen: zum einen sind dies zwei rechteckige Gruben, die unmittelbar vor dem Eingang bzw. im Bereich des Vorraumes der Mithräen lagen (Abb. 3: 11). Die eine wird von der Treppenwange überlagert, die andere von einer Stickung des Vorraumes überschnitten, so dass sie – sofern sie nicht deutlich älter sind – zur älteren Bauphase gehören könnten.

Beide waren etwa 1,50 m tief und hatten mit ihrer rechteckigen Form und den in die Wände eingelassenen – an ‚Beigabennischen' erinnernde Ausbuchtungen – auffällige Ähnlichkeit mit den im Süden aufgedeckten Körpergräbern. Bis auf zwei unbestimmbare Scherben waren sie jedoch absolut fundleer.

Unmittelbar vor dem *Mithraeum* lag ein einmal verstürzter und erneuerter 4 m tiefer Brunnen, der z.T. mit Bauschutt aus dem *Mithraeum* verfüllt war (Abb. 3: 12).

Eine weitere Grube, etwa 3,50 m westlich des *Mithraeums* interessiert vor allem wegen ihres Inhaltes: neben einem 1,60 m langen Säulenschaft mit Kapitell und anderem Bauschutt, der vermutlich aus dem *Mithraeum* stammt, enthielt sie Unmengen figürlich bemalter Wandverputzfragmente. Da eine Freilegung der Verputze vor Ort zu aufwändig gewesen wäre, wurde sie als Block geborgen aber noch nicht konserviert.

8 *Bornheim-Sechtem. Nische und die beiden Schächte aus Mithraeum 1 und 3 (Foto: Van de Graaf Archäologie 1999).*

Ausstattung der Mithräen und besondere Fundumstände einiger Stücke

Da eine abschließende Gesamtauswertung aller Kleinfunde noch aussteht, sei hier nur kurz auf die mit der Architektur in Zusammenhang stehenden ungewöhnlichen Fundumstände einiger Funde herausgegriffen. Ch. Wulfmeier geht in seinem Beitrag näher auf sie ein[8].

[8] S. Wulfmeier in diesem Band.

Auf dem Boden der *cella* des jüngsten Baus lagen neben den zerschlagenen Resten von mehreren reliefierten Sandsteinen (Teile der Wandverkleidung, Säulenfragmente etc.) auch ein 60 x 25 cm großer und 10 cm hoher Sandsteinblock (Abb. 5 und 3: 3). An seinen zum Eingang weisenden Ecken waren kleine rechteckige Aussparungen herausgearbeitet. Er lag möglicherweise noch *in situ*, dafür sprechen seine mittige Lage in der Längsachse des Raumes und die Tatsache, dass alle Seiten des Quaders bis auf die auf dem Boden aufliegende glatt bearbeitet waren, während letztere nur Spuren der Grobzurichtung aufwies.

Unmittelbar auf dem Estrichboden um das in der NO-Ecke eingelassene Podest fanden sich in einem Umkreis von ca. einem Meter 25 Münzen (Lage s. Abb. 3). Abgesehen von zwei weiteren aus der Verfüllung und einem Schacht waren es die einzigen Geldstücke aus dem Bau, obwohl er während der Ausgrabung mit einem Metalldetektor abgesucht wurde. Daher ist die Konzentration um das Podest sicherlich nicht zufällig. Denkbar wären Opfergaben an eine Götterfigur auf dem Podest, ein Gefäß, in dem das Geld aufbewahrt wurde, von dem allerdings keine Scherben gefunden wurden, oder eine zufällig dort liegengebliebene Geldbörse.

Ganz besondere Aufmerksamkeit verdienen jedoch die Funde aus den beiden Schächten in den Böden der beiden Mithräen und der Nische samt ihrem später eingeschlagenen Loch aus dem jüngeren Bau. Bei allen drei Fundkomplexen handelt es sich um, geschlossene Befunde'.

Funde aus dem Tuffschacht von Mithraeum 3:
- das Schenkelfragment einer Statuette (Abb. 6)[9];
- ein gelbglasiertes Keramikrelief mit der Darstellung des Cautes (Abb. 6)[10];
- eine durch Feuer beschädigte Münze des Valentinian (365-378? n.Chr.);
- ein Firnisbecher (Abb. 9);
- ein Eberzahn (Abb. 9);
- eine Schlacke.

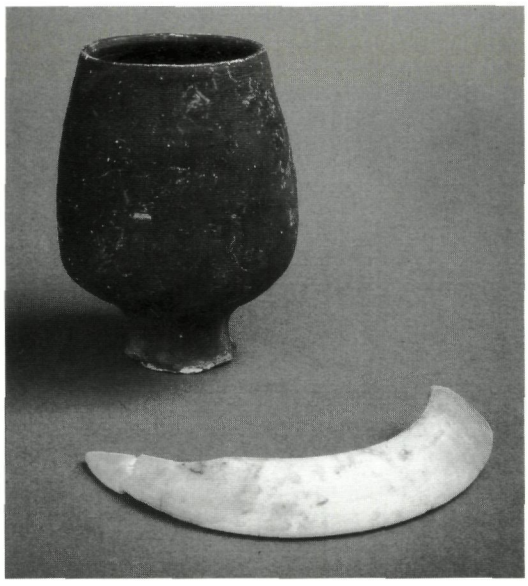
Funde in der Nische des Podiums von Mithraeum 3:
- der zerschlagene Ober- und Unterkörper einer Statuette und weitere skulptierte Bruchstücke[11]
- eine gelbglasierte Reliefkeramik mit der Darstellung eines Löwen[12]
- und ein ca. 15cm langes geripptes Silberblatt (Abb. 10) mit der eingepunzten "Inschrift":

D(eo) . I(nvicto) . M(ithrae)
B E N A G I V S
V(otum) . S(olvit) . L(ibens) . M(erito)[13]

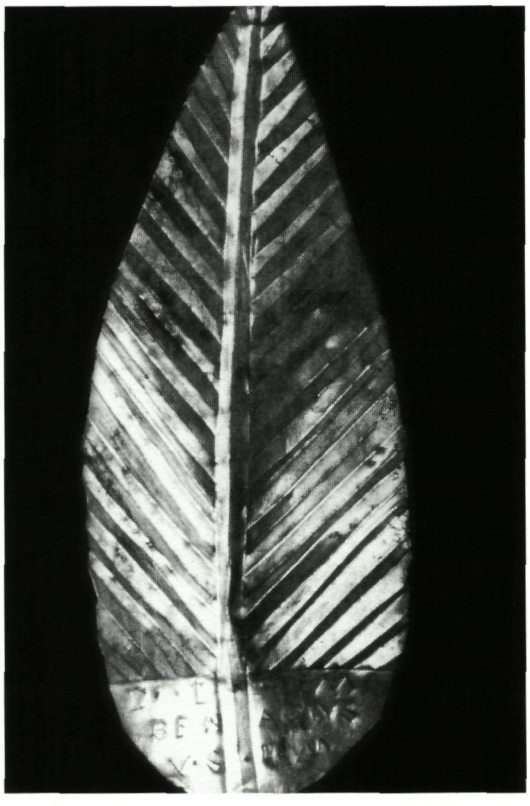
In dem in den Estrich geschlagenen Loch unter der Nische lagen Scherben eines weiteren Firnisbechers.

Aus den Ziegelschacht des *Mithraeums* 1 stammen außer auffälligen Holzkohleresten eine ebenfalls gelbglasierte Reliefkeramik mit der Darstellung einer Schlange (Abb. 7)[14].

9 *Bornheim-Sechtem. Firnisbecher und Eberzahn. Weitere in situ - Funde aus dem Schacht von Mithraeum 3 (Foto: Van de Graaf Archäologie 2001).*



10 *Mithras geweihtes silbernes Votivblatt (Länge 15 cm) (Foto: Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn 2001).*



[9] Ebd. Abb. 5.
[10] Ebd. Abb. 6.
[11] Ebd. Abb. 1; Bauchhenss 2000, Abb. S. 305; Ulbert & Wulfmeier 2000, Abb. S. 303.
[12] Ebd. Abb. 7; Ulbert & Wulfmeier 2000, Abb. S. 302.
[13] Der Name BENAGIUS ist in spätrömischer Zeit belegt, allerdings bislang nicht nördlich der Alpen, vgl. Kajanto 1965, 22 u. 363.
[14] Vgl. Anm. 8, Abb. 8.

Die Fundumstände und Zusammensetzung der Fundensembles lassen eine absichtliche Deponierung vermuten: der Schacht des älteren Baus war durch den Estrich von Mithraeum 3 versiegelt. Daher kann das Schlangenrelief nicht zufällig oder später dort hin gelangt sein.

In der Nische von *Mithraeum* 3 ergibt sich ein ähnliches Bild: durch das, Sammelsurium' der unterschiedlichsten Relief- und Skulpturenbruchstücke sowie der Datierung der Statuette in das 2. Jh. n. Chr.[15], die zudem durch ein im *Mithraeum* sonst nicht nachweisbares Schadfeuer[16] beschädigt war: die Stücke können dort keinesfalls ursprünglich gewesen sein, sie müssen ebenfalls absichtlich niedergelegt worden sein. Auch das silberne Votivblatt – verkeilt zwischen den Reliefs – lag sicherlich nicht an seinem ursprünglichen Ort. Ähnliches gilt für die unterschiedliche Zusammensetzung der Funde aus dem Schacht von *Mithraeum* 3; Firnisbecher und Eberzahn waren darüber hinaus völlig unversehrt (s. Abb. 9)!

Besonders auffällig sind die drei gelbglasierten Reliefkeramiken, die, obwohl aus unterschiedlichen Bauten stammend vermutlich zu ein und demselben Objekt gehören[17]: in jedem der drei Fundensembles lag ein solches Stück. Anscheinend hatte man zwei der glasierten Stücke absichtlich feinsäuberlich am Rand der Motive abgeschlagen.

Fazit: Die Zusammensetzung der Funde, die Fundstellen in angelegten 'Verstecken', und die unterschiedliche Datierung der Befunde lassen eine absichtliche Deponierung als 'Reliquien', 'heiligem Müll' oder Bauopfer vermuten[18].

Datierung

Unter den Münzen auf dem Estrich um das Podest war die älteste eine Prägung des Postumus (268), die jüngste eine des Valentinian II (388-402). Dazwischen gab es eine kleine Münzreihe beginnend mit einer Prägung des Valentinian I (364-375) und einer Schlussmünze des Theodosius I (388-392 u. 394-395). Bei der in dem Schacht des jüngeren Baus gefundene Münze handelte es sich um eine Prägung des Valentinian I (365-378). In der Verfüllung ohne Zusammenhang lag eine Prägung des Laelianus (268)[19].

Abgesehen von der Statuette (s.o.) lassen sich die übrigen Funde, die eindeutig aus den Mithräen stammen nicht genauer datieren. Die Münzen vom Boden und aus dem Schacht des jüngeren *Mithraeums* bilden somit eine relativ sichere Grundlage für die Datierung des Baus in die 2. Hälfte des 4. Jh.

Aus dem älteren *Mithraeum* stammen keine datierbaren Funde.

Zusammenfassung

Die vorgelegten Funde und Befunde aus einer archäologischen Rettungsgrabung aus Sechtem stammen von einem mehrphasigen, spätrömischen *Mithraeum* des 4. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. Die hochinteressanten Funde (glasierte Keramiken eines Kultobjektes, silbernes Blattvotiv, Steinplastiken u. a.) sind wichtige archäologische Quellen für die Ausstattung spätrömischer Mithräen im Hinterland von Köln. Bekanntlich fand man die meisten Mithräen in den Nordprovinzen bei römischen Lagern oder Kastellvici. Bei der räumlichen und zeitlichen Nähe unserer Mithräen zu dem vorläufig als römische Villa gedeuteten Baukomplex scheint es sich jedoch eher um ein Privatmithräum zu handeln.

Summary

In 1999, during a rescue excavation in Bornheim-Sechtem near Bonn, Germany, architectural remains of a Roman Mithraic sanctuary of the late 4th Century AD were unearthed. The temple was situated in the immediate neighbourhood of a possible main dwelling house of a Roman *villa rustica.*

Apart from the architectural remains, the small finds were of special interest: together with the fragments of a small *cautes* statue, three yellow-glazed modelled ceramic fragments were found, representing *cautes*, *leo* and *serpens*, well known in the Mithraic context. All objects were unearthed *in situ* in two sanctuary shafts and a niche of the temple. Although found in different superimposed buildings and different ensembles, the ceramics appear to belong to the same cult object. These circumstances and other indications lead to the conclusion, that fragments of broken or damaged cult objects were not simply thrown away by the Mithraists, but possibly considered relics or holy trash and hidden in special places. Another extraordinary small find was a silver votive leaf dedicated to Mithras by a person called Benagius.

Samenvatting

In 1999 werden tijdens noodopgravingen in Bornheim-Sechtem, bij Bonn in Duitsland, de architecturale resten van een Romeins heiligdom voor Mithras uit de 4de eeuw AD opgegraven. De tempel bevond zich in de onmiddellijke omgeving van het mogelijk hoofdgebouw van een Romeinse *villa rustica.*

Naast de architecturale resten waren ook de vondsten hoogst interessant: samen met fragmenten van een klein beeld van Cautes werden ook drie geel geglazuurde gemodelleerde fragmenten van

[15] Ebd.; Bauchhenss 2000, 305.
[16] Bauchhenss 2000, 304.
[17] Vgl. Anm. 8.
[18] Zur Interpretation von Kultgruben in Mithräen: Huld-Zetsche 1986, 16; Huld-Zetsche in diesem Band.
[19] Für die Bestimmung der Münzen sei den Herren A. Blasius und D. Piekarski gedankt

vaatwerk teruggevonden. Deze fragmenten stellen respectievelijk *cautes*, *leo* en *serpens* voor, zeer bekend in contexten van Mithrastempels. Deze werden *in situ* aangetroffen in twee schachten en een nis van de tempel. Hoewel de fragmenten gevonden werden in contexten van verschillende bouwfasen van de tempel lijken zij tot één en hetzelfde voorwerp te behoren. De vondstomstandigheden en andere indicaties tonen aan dat de fragmenten van gebroken cultusobjecten niet gewoon weggegooid werden, maar dat zij eerder als relicten of heilig afval beschouwd werden en aldus werden opgeborgen op speciale plaatsen. Een andere buitengewone vondst was een votiefblad in zilver dat werd opgedragen aan Mithras door een persoon met de naam Benagius.

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Ton, Steine, Scherben – Skulpturen und Reliefkeramiken aus dem *Mithraeum* von Bornheim-Sechtem

Johann-Christoph WULFMEIER

Unter den Kleinfunden von Sechtem erregten die Skulpturenfragmente und eine kleine Gruppe bleiglasierter Reliefkeramiken von Anfang an das besondere Interesse der Ausgräber[1]. Die gefundenen Darstellungen ließen schon zu einem sehr frühen Stadium der Freilegung die Vermutung zu, daß es sich bei dem erfassten Baubefund um ein *Mithraeum* handelt. Die eigenartigen Fundumstände der Statuetten- und Reliefbruchstücke wie auch der Keramiken legen nahe, daß die zerschlagenen Bilder eine ganz besondere Bedeutung für die Gemeinde hatten[2].

Der folgende Artikel kann die fraglichen Kleinfunde nicht abschließend bearbeiten sondern nur vorstellen. Er soll im Sinne der Tagung in Tienen die Möglichkeit eröffnen, das Sechtemer Material in einem größeren Zusammenhang zu sehen.

Bei der Ausgrabung der jüngsten Bauphase des Bornheimer *Mithraeums* stieß man auf neun Skulpturenbruchstücke aus Kalkstein[3]. Sie lagen – bis auf eins – zusammengeworfen in einer Nische [2] an der Nordseite des Hauptraumes[4]. Leider ist das Ensemble derart fragmentiert, daß nicht sicher zu sagen ist, von wievielen Skulpturen die Teile stammen.

Sicher zusammen gehören der Oberkörper, der Unterkörper und der rechte Unterschenkel einer etwa 60 cm großen Statuette (Abb. 1 und 2 links oben, Mitte). Sie zeigt einen Mann, der mit Hose,

1 *Statuette des Cautes, 2. Jh. n. Chr. (Nach Bauchhenss 2000, Abb. S. 305.)*

[1] Der vorliegende Beitrag ist die leicht überarbeitete Fassung des am 8.11.2001 in Tienen/Belgien gehaltenen Vortrags. Anregungen und Hilfe erfuhr ich von G. Bauchhenss (Bonn), V. Gassner (Wien), I. Huld-Zetsche (Frankfurt) sowie U. Sobottka-Braun, F. Willer, D. Meyer-Wefering (alle Bonn), V. Schulz, (Brühl). Den Kolleginnen und Kollegen in Tienen, allen voran M. Martens, danke ich für die Einladung nach Belgien und die gewährte Gastfreundschaft.

[2] Und zwar im Sinne von Reliquien bzw. 'Heiligem Müll'. Siehe dazu den Beitrag von C. Ulbert in diesem Band. Dort auch ein Plan des *Mithraeums* (Abb. 3) mit numerischer Kennzeichnung einzelner Bau- und Ausstattungselemente, auf den im folgenden verwiesen wird [ ].

[3] Eine erste Vorlage des *Mithraeums* und einiger Funde durch Ulbert & Wulfweier 2000. Die Sulpturenfragmente sind schon kurz besprochen von Bauchhenss 2000. Die Brüche des für die Sechtemer Skulpturen verwendeten Kalksteins lokalisiert er am Mittellauf der Mosel zwischen Nancy und Metz.

[4] Aus dem Vorgängerbau konnte ein mit Sicherheit dorthin verschlepptes Fragment einer Iuppitersäule [9] geborgen werden. Das Stück aus Sandstein lag verkantet in dem Kanal [8] vor der Südwestseite. Die Anordnung der Götterreliefs auf dem Säulenschaft ist bislang einzigartig s. Bauchhenss 2000.

2 *Statuettenfragmente aus der Nische von* Mithräum *3 mit Spuren eines Schadfeuers (Foto Van de Graaf Archäologie 2001).*

Tunika und auf der rechten Schulter gefibelten Mantel bekleidet ist. Die beschriebene Tracht und der Fundkontext der Statuette legen nahe, in ihr eine Figur des mithrischen Kreises zu erkennen. In Anbetracht der zu rekonstruierenden Armhaltung des Mannes – der rechte Arm war wahrscheinlich erhobenen, der linke gesenkt, leicht schräg nach hinten geführt und dann wohl angewinkelt – wird es sich um Cautes handeln.

Die lebhaften und dabei sehr präzise gearbeiteten Gewandfalten sowie die Tiefe der Statuette sprechen für eine Entstehung noch im 2. Jhdt. nach Chr.[5]. Die Cautesdarstellung ist also gut 150 Jahre älter als der Baubefund in dem sie angetroffen wurde und muß aus einer älteren Bauphase in *Mithraeum* 3 überführt worden sein.

Von Bedeutung ist nun, daß die Statuettenfragmente starke Verfärbungen zeigen, die auf den ersten Blick wie Stuckierungen wirken. Sie rühren aber höchstwahrscheinlich von einem Schadfeuer her, das Teile der Oberfläche brannte. Man darf also vermuten, daß die Überführung vielleicht schon in fragmentiertem Zustand geschah.

Vergleichbare Spuren eines Brandes finden sich an zwei weiteren Fragmenten. Zum einen handelt es sich um ein annähernd quadratisches, ca. 8 cm großes Bruchstück, daß möglicherweise von einem Relief stammt (Abb. 2 links unten). Andererseits erinnern die erhaltenen parallelen Linien in ihrer Ausführung an die Gewandangabe hinter dem rechten Unterschenkel der Statuette. Vielleicht darf man also in dem Bruchstück einen Teil der auch im oberen Hintergrund zu vermutenden Mantelfalten erkennen.

Das zweite der beiden fraglichen Fragmente muß aufgrund einer ovalen Ansatzspur in einem größeren figürlichen Zusammenhang gesehen werden (Abb. 2 rechts). Obwohl das Stück auf den ersten Blick so charakteristisch erscheint, ist seine Deutung unsicher. Denkbar wäre, in dem Fragment einen Teil des Schaftes einer Fackel zu sehen[6].

Zu einer zweiten Statuette gehören ein Ober- und ein anpassendes Unterschenkelfragment, beide ohne erkenbare Reste von Bekleidung (Abb. 3). Da auf der Rückseite Ansatzspuren fehlen, handelt es sich wahrscheinlich um ein zurückgestelltes rechtes und nicht um ein übergeschlagenes linkes Bein. Aufgrund ihrer Maße könnten die zusammengefügten Fragmente zu einem Pendant des Cautes, also zu einer Darstellung des Cautopates, gehören. Gut dazu passt, daß die beiden

5 So zuerst Bauchhenss 2000.

6 Eine Fackel, die dann möglicherweise unser Cautes gehalten hat, wenngleich sie etwas überproportioniert wäre.

3 *Zusammengesetztes Bein einer weiteren Statuette aus der Nische (Foto Van de Graaf Archäologie 2001). M. 2:5.*

4 *Bleiglasierte Gefäßapplik mit Darstellung des Cautes aus dem Tuffsteinschacht (Foto Van de Graaf Archäologie 2001). M. 2:3.*

Statuetten gegensätzlich ponderiert sind. Da Cautes und Cautopates aber regelhaft bekleidet dargestellt werden, scheidet diese Möglichkeit wohl aus. Es sei denn, die Bekleidung war nur in knapper plastischer Form im jetzt verlorenen Kniebereich angegeben, bzw. in Malerei ausgeführt.

Desweiteren fand sich in der Nische ein an einer Seite profiliertes Relieffragment, daß 21 x 12 cm misst. Der zur Leiste hin ansteigende Reliefgrund hat eine maximale Stärke von 6 cm. Die Rückseite ist geglättet. Wenn es sich bei der Profilierung um den oberen Abschluß der Platte handelt, ist man versucht im Kontur der weggebrochenen Darstellung den Kopf einer Figur mit ausgestrecktem linken Arm zu erkennen. Es muß aber auch in Betracht gezogen werden, daß das Fragment zum linken oder rechten Rand der Platte gehört. Nur eins ist sicher: aus dem unteren Teil des Reliefs kann das Bruchstück nicht stammen, da die Platte von der Profilierung zur Rückseite hin abgeschrägt ist, also eine gerade Standfläche fehlt.

In einem in den Estrich der *cella* eingelassenen, verschließbaren Tuffsteinschacht [1] lag schließlich das neunte und letzte Skulpturenfragment, ein ca. 12 cm langer, unbekleideter Oberschenkel. Seine Ausarbeitung erinnert an das nackte Bein aus der Nische. Das Bruchstück könnte somit zum linken Standbein der weitestgehend verlorenen Statuette gehört haben.

In dem Schacht fanden sich weiterhin eine durch Feuer beschädigte Münze Valentinians I. (365-378 n. Chr.), ein Firnisbecher, ein Eberzahn, ein Schlackebrocken sowie ein mit gelber Bleiglasur überzogenes Keramikfragment mit Darstellung des Cautes in Relief. Neben dem Cautes (Abb. 4) kamen in Sechtem noch zwei weitere figürliche Bleikeramiken zutage: in der Nische [2] der Nordwestseite, direkt neben den Skulpturen, lagen zwei anpassende Fragmente mit dem Bild eines Löwen (Abb. 5) und aus einem Ziegelschacht [6] im Boden von *Mithraeum* 1 konnte eine Schlange (Abb. 6) geborgen werden[7]. Wichtig ist, daß der Tuffsteinschacht des jüngsten *Mithraeums* sich ganz offentsichtlich an dem Ziegelschacht des Vorgängerbaus orientiert, bzw. auf ihn Rücksicht nimmt[8].

Weiterhin wurden drei ebenfalls bleiglasierte aber unfigürliche Scherben in der Verfüllung über dem Estrichboden gefunden (Abb. 7). Es handelt sich dabei um das 1 cm starke Fragment eines Deckels, dessen ursprünglicher Durchmesser ca. 16 cm betrug sowie um das Bruchstück eines Fußes mit einem ursprünglichen Durchmesser von ca. 13 cm bei einer Stärke von 1,2 cm. Das Deckelfragment ist auf der Oberseite mit bräunlich-gelber, der Fuß mit grünlich-gelber Glasur überzogen. Eine weitere, 0,3 cm dicke Scherbe zeigt auf der einen Seite regelmäßige Riefeln, auf der anderen

7 Die Verfüllung des Ziegelschachtes war massiv mit Holzkohle durchsetzt.

8 Daneben liegt der Tuffsteinschacht genau in der Mittelachse der *cella* und ist offenbar auch in Beziehung zur Nische der Nordwestseite zu sehen. Vgl. dazu den Beitrag von C. Ulbert in diesem Band. Der am ehesten vergleichbare Befund ist aus dem *Mithraeum* von Mundelsheim bekannt: Planck 1989. Dort sind vier Töpfe in den Boden der *cella* eingelassen. Drei der Töpfe waren mit Tierknochen (Rind, Schwein, Geflügel) gefüllt. Planck deutet die Gefäße als Bauopfer.

5 *Gefäßapplik mit Löwendarstellung aus der Nische (Foto Van de Graaf Archäologie 2001). M. 2:3.*

Reste bräunlich-gelber Glasur mit schwarzen Einschlüssen.

Allen sechs Fragmenten ist neben der Glasur ihr Grundmaterial gemeinsam: es handelt sich um einen fein gemägerten – aufgrund der roten Einschlüsse mit Ziegelmehl? – leicht rosafarbenen Ton[9].

Die aus dem Model genommene Darstellung des Cautes mißt ca. 11 x 6 cm (Abb. 4). Bei einer Dicke von gut 1 cm fallen die starken Schwankungen in der Reliefgrundstärke auf, die zwischen 0,2 cm und 1 cm variiert. Originaler Rand ist nicht erhalten. Die wenig sorgfältig geglättete Rückseite ist unregelmäßig leicht gewellt. Die zu erkennenden Fingernagelabdrücke sind beim Herausnehmen der Keramik aus dem Model in den lederharten Ton geraten.

Cautes ist wie üblich in orientalischer Tracht dargestellt. Er trägt die phrygische Mütze, eine gegürtete Tunika und sicherlich – auch wenn es sich an dem Fragment nicht eindeutig erkennen läßt – eine Hose. Dazu ist er mit einem auf der rechten Schulter gefibelten Mantel bekleidet, der nach rechts wegweht.

Die Figur steht mit linkem Standbein und rechtem dahintergeschlagenen Spielbein auf einer leichten, offenbar felsigen Erhebung[10]. Für die auf der Keramik dargestellte Szene ist also zu vermuten, daß sie in der freien Natur spielt. Mit der erhobenen rechten Hand hält Cautes eine Fackel, von der nur der untere Teil des Schaftes erhalten ist[11]. Der linke Arm der Figur ist nach Ausweis der Schulter gesenkt und offenbar angewinkelt. Möglicherweise hielt Cautes mit der linken Hand ein unter der Achsel geführtes *pedum*, wofür ein über der Schulter zu erkennender Reliefrest spricht[12].

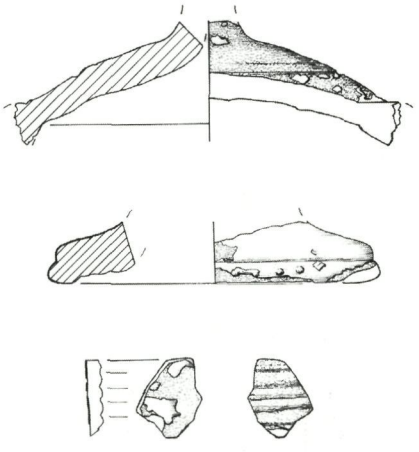
Links der Figur sieht man eine leicht geschwungene, schräg nach links oben weggehende Wulst, die durch unregelmäßige, mit dem Modellierstäbchen eingedrückte Kerben gegliedert ist. In dieser Relieflinie könnte man einen Baumstamm erkennen. Da Cautes aber offentsichtlich in einer felsigen Landschaft steht, ist eher an den Rand der Grotte zu denken, in der die Stiertötung stattfindet. Über dem erhobenen rechten Arm und dem Kopf der Figur befindet sich ein weiterer, bislang nicht zu deutender Reliefrest.

Aus einem Model ist auch die Darstellung des nach rechts springenden Löwens genommen (Abb. 5).

Zusammen sind die beiden Fragmente ca 11 x 8 cm groß. Die max. Dicke der Keramik beträgt ca. 1 cm, die Reliefgrundstärke liegt bei ca. 0,5 cm.

6 *Bleiglasierte Schlange aus dem Ziegelschacht von* Mithräum *1 (Foto Van de Graaf Archäologie 2001). M. 2:3.*

7 *Bleiglasierte Keramikfragmente aus der Verfüllung über dem Estrichboden von* Mithräum *3 (Zeichnung: S. Stahn). M. 1:3.*



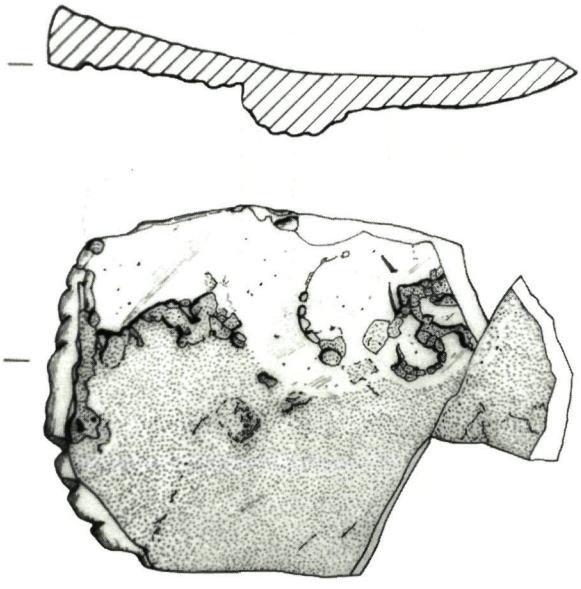
[9] Im Zuge einer weiteren Beschäftigung mit den Fragmenten wäre eine genaue Analyse zur möglichen Lagerstätte des verarbeiteten Tones wünschenswert.

[10] Der erhöhte Stand der Dadophoren findet z. B. eine Entsprechung auf dem im Badischen Landesmuseum Karlsruhe unter Inv. Nr. C 16 verwahrten Relief aus dem *Mithraeum* von Neuenheim: Vermaseren 1956/60, 1283; Schwertheim 1974, 184 f., Kat. Nr. 141a, Taf. 40, spricht von felsenartigen Postamenten auf denen die Fackelträger stehen.
Wenn Cautes mit überkreuzten Beinen dargestellt ist, dann immer – soweit ich sehe – mit über das Standbein geschlagenem Spielbein. Beim Sechtemer Cautes ist dies anders. Wahrscheinlich ist diese Auffälligkeit technisch begründet.

[11] Für diese nur recht selten zu beobachtende Haltung der Fackel ist wiederum das Neuenheimer Relief der beste Vergleich.

[12] Die Fackel in der Rechten und ein *pedum* unter der linken Achsel zeigt der Cautes auf der im Budapester Nationalmuseum verwahrten Bronzeplatte aus Brigetio: Vermaseren 1956/60, 1727; Merkelbach 1984, 378, Abb.143.

8 *Rückseite und Profil der Löwenapplik (Zeichnung: S. Stahn). M. 2:3.*



Oben, unten und rechts ist der originale Rand erhalten.

Die gewölbte Rückseite ist sorgfältig geglättet und im oberen Drittel zu großen Teilen mit übergelaufener Glasur gedeckt. Unglasiert sind dort nur die anhaftenden, flachgedrückten Tonreste (Abb. 8). Auf der ganzen Rückseite sind im Streiflicht feine parallele Horizontallinien zu beobachten.

Ebenfalls gewölbt und geglättet ist die unglasierte Rückseite der frei gearbeiteten Schlange aus *Mithraeum* 1 (Abb. 6). Das Bruchstück ist ca 10 x 3 cm groß und gut 2 cm hoch. Originaler Rand ist nicht erhalten. Der Körper des Tieres ist mit drei von vorne nach hinten verlaufenden Reihen kleiner eingetiefter Kreise verziert, wobei die Kreise innerhalb der Reihen unregelmäßig dicht gesetzt sind. Die Knopfaugen der Schlange sind aufgesetzt. Der ehemals sicher vorhandene "Zackenkamm" der Schlange ist weggebrochen.

Fragt man nach dem ursprünglichen Funktion der Reliefkeramiken, so kann man mit einiger Gewißheit sagen, daß es sich um Gefäßappliken handelt. Dafür sprechen einmal äußere Gründe: figürlich verzierte Kultgefäße, wie die sogenannten Schlangenvasen sind im Mithraskult weitverbreitet. Daneben gibt es zahlreiche Belege, die das Vorkommen bleiglasierter und auch figurenverzierter Gefäße in Mithräen bezeugen[13]. Verwundern kann dies nicht: in den künstlich beleuchteten Kulträumen dürften die glasierten Keramiken, die ja die patinierte bzw. polierte Oberfläche bronzener Objekte nachahmen sollten, ihre Wirkung kaum verfehlt haben[14].

Aber auch die Sechtemer Keramiken selbst geben Hinweise auf ihre Zugehörigkeit zu einem Gefäß. Zumindest die Rückseiten von Schlange und Löwe (Abb. 8) sind geglättet und gerundet. Beim Löwen sind dort zudem die erwähnten parallelen Horizontallinien zu beobachten. Dabei könnte es sich um Abdrücke der scheibengedrehten Ware handeln, auf der der Löwe appliziert war. Diese These wird von einer weiteren Beobachtung unterstützt. Das obere Drittel der Löwenrückseite ist glasiert, wobei dieser Bereich durchsetzt ist von anhaftenden, flachgedrückten und vor allen Dingen unglasierten Tonresten. Dies kann man so erklären, daß die Keramik einem Trägergefäß aufsaß, von dem sie sich nach dem ersten Brand im oberen Bereich in Teilen löste. Beim Aufbringen der Glasur wurden auch die abgelösten Parteien der Rückseite überzogen.

Schlußendlich stellt sich die Frage nach der Zeitstellung der Keramiken und damit nach der wahrscheinlichen Zugehörigkeit aller Stücke zu einem Gefäß, wofür ja der allen Fragmenten gemeinsame rosafarbene Ton spricht[15]. Man kann es vorwegnehmen: die Lösung dieses Problems kann an dieser Stelle nicht geboten werden.

Die Datierung betreffend ist grundsätzlich anzumerken, daß die Technik der Bleiglasierung in den römischen Rheinlanden ab tiberischer Zeit (Köln) bis ins 4. Jh. (Krefeld-Gellep) bekannt war[16].

Der archäologische Befund von Bornheim-Sechtem selbst gibt leider einzig einen Hinweis auf die Zeitstellung des Schlangenfragments. Auf dem Estrichboden des jüngsten *Mithraeum*s lagen zwischen einem Sockel [4] und einer Basis [3] 25 Münzen. Abgesehen von zwei Prägungen des Postumus und Laelianus aus dem Jahr 268, gehören sie in die Zeit zwischen Valentinianus I. und Theodosius I., also in das letzte Drittel des 4. Jhs. und liefern für die Schlange – die meines Erachtens aus sich selbst heraus kaum datierbar ist – einen *terminus ante quem.*

Bei der chronologischen Einordnung von Cautes und Löwe stehen wir vor dem zusätzlichen Problem, daß wir auf stilistischem Wege nur – wenn überhaupt – die Model datieren könnten. Da wir bei diesen eine längere Nutzung annehmen müssen, ist eine wirklich verläßliche Aussage über die Zusammengehörigkeit der Fragmente auch so nicht zu machen.

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[13] Ein besonders anschauliches Beispiel gibt ein figurenverziertes Gefäß aus Zillis/Kanton Graubünden. Vgl. dazu Rageth 1994 und Liver & Rageth 2001. Auch der Kongreß in Tienen machte Beliebtheit bleiglasierter Ware in den Mithräen deutlich. Eine Zusammenstellung und Auswertung des Materials aus den Heiligtümern wäre sicher lohnend.

[14] Das man den Eindruck von Bronze und nicht von Gold erwecken wollte zeigt Gabelmann 1974.

[15] Die leicht abweichende Farbgebung der Fragmente kann ihre Zugehörigkeit zu einem Objekt nicht ausschließen. Die nicht immer gleichmäßige Dicke des Glasurauftrags sowie Temperaturschwankungen während des Brandes können zu einem ganz unterschiedlichen Ergebnis an einem Gefäß führen.

[16] Zur zeitlichen Streuung bleiglasierter Keramik und besonders zu ihrer Verbreitung im Köln/Bonner Raum s. Gabelmann 1974, 265; La Baume 1967/68 und zuletzt Mathea-Förtsch 1999. Zur glasierten spätrömischen Keramik vgl. Liesen-Pirling 1998.

SUMMARY

In the Mithraic sanctuary of Bornheim-Sechtem, nine sculpture fragments were found, some of them damaged by fire. They seem to belong to at least two statuettes and a relief. One of the statuettes can be identified as *cautes*. For stylistic reasons, the figure of *cautes* must be more than 150 years older than the architectural context in which it was found.

Furthermore, in *Mithraeum* 1 and 3, three glazed applications of a vessel were recovered. It is possible that all come from the same object – a cult-vessel with the image of the *tauroctonie*.

The finding of the applics in different phases of the *Mithraeum*, the early date of the Cautes and most of all the unusual places of discovery show that the fragments must be of a very special interest for the mithraic worshipers of Sechtem. The broken sculptures and ceramics seem to be like relics for the community.

SAMENVATTING

In het heiligdom voor Mithras in Bonheim-Sechtem werden negen fragmenten van sculpturen gevonden, waarvan sommigen beschadigd door vuur. De fragmenten horen toe aan ten minste twee beeldjes en één reliëf. Eén van de beelden kan geïdentificeerd worden als Cautes. Uit stilistische overwegingen dient dit beeldje minstens 150 jaar vroeger gedateerd te worden dan de architecturale context waarin het gevonden is.

Ook werden in contexten uit de 1ste en de 3de fase van het *mithraeum* drie geglazuurde stukken van oplegwerk teruggevonden. Het is mogelijk dat deze fragmenten tot hetzelfde object behoren, een cultusvat met afbeelding van de tauroctonie.

De vondst van de fragmenten van oplegwerk in contexten uit verschillende fasen van het *mithreaum*, de vroege datum van het Cautesbeeldje en de ongewone plaatsen waarop deze werden teruggevonden tonen aan dat deze stukken van bijzonder belang waren voor de aanhangers van de Mithrascultus in Sechtem. De gebroken beelden en het fragmentaire aardewerk lijken wel een soort relicten geweest te zijn voor de gemeenschap.

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